



A LENTEN
CALL TO PRAYER

Small Group Study Guide

9 March—19 April 2025

WHAKATAUKI

*Mā te rongo, ka mōhio,
Mā te mōhio, ka mārama,
Mā te mārama, ka mātau,
Mā te mātau, ka ora.*

*From listening comes knowledge,
from knowledge comes understanding,
From understanding comes wisdom,
from wisdom comes life.*

INTRODUCTION

Tena koutou katoa, nau mai ki te pukapuka ako.

Greetings all, welcome to this study guide.

What is Lent?

Lent is the 40-day lead-up to Easter Sunday. It is a season of the Christian year where we intentionally prepare ourselves to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus and seek ways to live more like Christ. In various forms, Lent has been practised for well over a millennium. There are three traditional emphases:

Fasting. Going without. Helping us focus on our greatest need.

Prayer. Journeying with God through all the seasons of life.

Giving. Embracing gratitude and generosity as a way of life.*

* from Tear Fund <https://www.tearfund.org.nz/Lent>

What is This Study Guide About?

During Lent, we will recite and reflect on six common prayers.

This study is intended to sit alongside our Lenten Call to Prayer.

We have chosen a prayer for each week of Lent.

Each day at 9:30am we will pause, wherever we are, to pray the prayer of the week.

This small group study includes moments of pause, questions for discussion based on the prayer of the week, and an opportunity to explore a spiritual practice.

A WORD ON SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Spiritual Practices are intentional habits, relationships and experiences that create space in our lives for us to keep company with Jesus. Spiritual Practices can be both personal and interpersonal.

Our engagement with Spiritual Practices is fuelled by our desire to know and love God. Spiritual Practices put us in a position where we can begin to notice God and respond to God's word to us.

*God's love inspires our action,
but our action does not inspire God's love.
Our habits will not change God's love for us,
but God's love for us
can and should change our habits.*

Justin Whitmel Early

In the midst of busy, scattered, exhausted and hurting lives,
we can experience God's great love.

RESOURCES

This content has been created using these resources.

Spiritual Disciples Handbook: Practices that Transform Us
by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

Celebration of Discipline
by Richard Foster

The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction by
Justin Whitmel Early

*Habits of the Household:
Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms*
by Justin Whitmel Early

The Spirit of the Disciplines
by Dallas Willard

The Good and Beautiful God
by James Bryan Smith

Week One
9 March—15 March

The Lord's Prayer

Welcome

Selah / Whai Wā / Pause

Prayer of the Week: The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who lives in heaven

Holy be your name

Your kingdom come, your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven

Give us today our daily bread

and forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us

Save us from the time of trial

Rescue us from the evil one

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory

now and forever

Amen

Discussion on the Prayer of the Week

Look In: What word or phrase from the prayer catches your attention?

Look At: What stories or sayings from the Bible come to mind?

Look Around: How does this prayer nudge us toward our community?

Look Up: What is God calling us to do or become?

Spiritual Practice: Daily Examen

St Ignatius of Loyola's Examen is a practice for noticing where God shows up in our day and paying attention to what we might otherwise miss. The Examen invites us to name both high and low points, recognising these as invitations to prayer.

The Examen is a time of personal reflection and prayer.

Take time now to practice together as your leader guides you through the steps below. You do not need to share aloud.

- Breathe / Ha ki roto, ha ki waho
- Prayer / Karakia:
Holy Spirit, help us to see what you see.
Still our minds, open our hearts
- Review: Replay your day in your mind.
For what moment today am I most grateful? [PAUSE]
For what moment today am I least grateful? [PAUSE]
When did I feel close to God today? [PAUSE]
When did I feel far from God today? [PAUSE]
- Reflect: What is it about these moments that stands out most to you?
Explore the concrete details of the situation, as well as your personal feelings, reactions, and inner experience.
How is God calling me to respond?
- Look Ahead: How might my reflection on today change how I live tomorrow?

Invitation

Practise the Examen daily over the next week.

Adaptation for Families

I Spy God. At the dinner table talk together about where you have spied God in your day.

Week Two
16 March—22 March

The Serenity Prayer

Welcome

Opening Discussion

Were you able to practice the Daily Examen in the last week?

If so, describe what you did and how you felt about it.

What did you learn about God or yourself through the spiritual practice?

Selah / Whai Wā/ Pause

Prayer of the Week: Prayer of Serenity

God,

grant me the serenity

to accept the things I cannot change,

the courage

to change the things I can,

and the wisdom

to know the difference.

Amen.

Discussion on the Prayer of the Week

Look In: What word or phrase from the prayer catches your attention?

Look At: What stories or sayings from the Bible come to mind?

Look Around: How does this prayer nudge us toward our community?

Look Up: What is God calling us to do or become?

Spiritual Practice: Simplicity

Simplicity is about uncomplicating our lives so we can focus on Jesus and his kingdom. Simplicity creates margins and spaces and openness in our lives. This practice cultivates the great art of letting go of the tangle of wants so we can receive the simple gifts of life that cannot be taken away.

Simplicity is an inward disposition and an outward expression.

Consider how God might be inviting you to create spaces for margin and simplicity in your life.

Discuss the suggestions below or come up with your own.

- Get up ten minutes earlier and create space for silence.
- Have a screen free evening.
- Explore scaling back some of your commitments.
- Uncomplicate your life by decluttering a space in your home. Such as the garage, that kitchen drawer, the toy box.
- Intentionally limit your choices.

Do you need 6 different kinds of cereal, or 4 streaming services?

- When you are asked to make a decision, pause and say, 'let me think about this for a moment. I will get back to you in ten minutes.' In that time, consider if you want to say yes or no, and discern how God is inviting you to fill your life.

Invitation

Choose one thing and practise it this week.

Adaptation for Families

Watch Bluey: Mr Monkey Jocks (Season 2, Episode 37)

<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/bluey/episodes/s2-e37>

Week Three
23 March—29 March

The Interruption Prayer

Welcome

Opening Discussion

Were you able to practise an act of simplicity in the last week?

If so, describe what you did and how you felt about it.

What did you learn about God or yourself through the spiritual practice?

Selah / Whai Wā / Pause

Prayer of the Week: Prayer of Interruption

God,

We invite you to interrupt our schedule,
our agenda and our plans.

We welcome you to say the things
we have been too busy or too distracted to hear.

Still our hearts, silence our minds,
order our chaos,

put everything back in its proper place.

Amen

Discussion on the Prayer of the Week

Look In: What word or phrase from the prayer catches your attention?

Look At: What stories or sayings from the Bible come to mind?

Look Around: How does this prayer nudge us toward our community?

Look Up: What is God calling us to do or become?

Spiritual Practice: Fasting

Fasting is an act of self-denial. It involves abstaining from a regular habit and turning our attention to God in prayer. While fasting, we offer God the time and attentiveness we might otherwise be giving to eating, shopping or screen time. The physical awareness of emptiness is the reminder to turn to Jesus who alone can nourish and satisfy.

Consider how God might be inviting you to fast.

Discuss the suggestions below or come up with your own.

- For a period of one week, fast from social media and remove the apps from your devices.
- Fast for one meal. Spend your mealtime in prayer.
- Abstain from purchasing a morning coffee or drink of your choice.

Offer the money or time to God.

- Use the stairs instead of the elevator/escalator.
- Go phone free for one hour per day.

Guidelines for fasting from food

Do not fast when you are sick or have a health condition, traveling, pregnant or nursing. Drink plenty of fluids. Break the fast gently. Seek advice from others.

Invitation

Choose one thing and practise it this week.

Adaptation for Families

Prepare a basic meal like plain rice or polenta and talk about how communities living in poverty rely on this meal daily.

www.tearfund.org.au/stories/how-to-help-12-ways-to-respond-to-global-hunger

Week Four
30 March—5 April

Prayer to Almighty God

Welcome

Opening Discussion

Were you able to practise an act of fasting in the last week?

If so, describe what you did and how you felt about it.

What did you learn about God or yourself through the spiritual practice?

Selah / Whai Wā / Pause

Prayer of the Week: Prayer to Almighty God

Almighty God,

to whom all hearts are open,

all desires known

and from whom no secrets are hidden:

cleanse the thoughts of our hearts

by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,

that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;

through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Discussion on the Prayer of the Week

Look In: What word or phrase from the prayer catches your attention?

Look At: What stories or sayings from the Bible come to mind?

Look Around: How does this prayer nudge us toward our community?

Look Up: What is God calling us to do or become?

Spiritual Practice: Confession

The practice of confession brings an end to pretence. God is forming a church that can openly confess its frail humanity and know the forgiving and empowering graces of Christ. Honesty leads to confession, and confession leads to change. We do not make God willing to forgive. It is God who is working to make us willing to seek God's forgiveness.

Take time now to practise together as your leader guides you through an act of private confession to God.

- Write down the things you want to confess.
- Read aloud Psalm 51.
- Tear up, shred or burn the paper.
- Read aloud 1 John 1:9

Invitation

Consider confessing to another person. In your own time, reflect on the different stages of your life. Write down whatever comes to you, no matter how crazy it is. Ask God to help you identify a mature follower of Jesus who is empathetic and understanding with whom you can confess. Following this, meet with the friend and read your list to them, confessing. Right now, the thought of this might seem really uncomfortable, and it likely will be. But the end goal is that we know the freedom which is only found when our lives are aligned with God.

Adaptation for Families

Think about the things you want to say sorry to God for. Speak them into your pillow. Then read aloud 1 John 1:9.

When children fight, invite them to apologise when they are ready, then hug until both children are laughing.

This is an act of reconciliation and an embodied Assurance of Pardon.

Week FIVE
6 April—12 April

Prayer of St Francis

Welcome

Opening Discussion

Were you able to practise an act of confession in the last week?

If so, describe what you did and how you felt about it.

What did you learn about God or yourself through the spiritual practice?

Selah / Whai Wā / Pause

Prayer of the Week: Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Discussion on the Prayer of the Week

Look In: What word or phrase from the prayer catches your attention?

Look At: What stories or sayings from the Bible come to mind?

Look Around: How does this prayer nudge us toward our community?

Look Up: What is God calling us to do or become?

Spiritual Practice: Service

Service is about noticing others and their needs. Service is rooted in seeing others as God does. Service grows humility in us and is a way of offering resources, time, influence and expertise for the care, protection, justice and nurture of others. We will never truly serve others unless we see that the needs of our neighbours are as real and as important as our own.

Service is not a list of things to do, though in it we discover things to do. Discuss the suggestions below or come up with your own.

- In your small group, plan a project together which moves your heart towards service. Such as cooking meals for the Pastoral Care Team to deliver, or plan a movie night to watch a film that encourages the viewers to see life from someone else's perspective (e.g. Hidden Figures, Wonder, Remember the Titans, Big Hero 6, Dead Man Walking, Whina)
- Each day, over the next week, ask someone you live with, work with, or spend time with, "what can I do for you today?" Then do it.
- Prayer Walk around your neighbourhood.
- Sign up to a mission organisations newsletter, and read it.
- When eating in the food court, take your (and perhaps someone else's) rubbish to the bins provided.

Invitation

Choose one thing and practise it this week.

Adaptation for Families

Make something to give away.

Do someone else's chore.

Play Secret Santa even though it's Autumn.

Ask, what can you do to make the other person feel happy/peaceful?

Week six
13 April—19 April

Prayer of Thomas Merton

Welcome

Opening Discussion

Were you able to practise an act of service in the last week?

If so, describe what you did and how you felt about it.

What did you learn about God or yourself through the spiritual practice?

Selah / Whai Wā / Pause

Prayer of the Week: Prayer of Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself,

and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though

I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me,

and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Discussion on the Prayer of the Week

Look In: What word or phrase from the prayer catches your attention?

Look At: What stories or sayings from the Bible come to mind?

Look Around: How does this prayer nudge us toward our community?

Look Up: What is God calling us to do or become?

Spiritual Practice: Breath Prayer

Breath Prayer is an ancient form of prayer linked to the rhythms of breathing. It simply requires choosing one or two lines to meditate on while inhaling and exhaling through them. The brevity of the prayer allows it to be repeated over and over throughout the day.

Take time now to practise together as your leader guides you through the steps below:

- Become aware of your body.
- Sit in a way that is comfortable for you, a position that will allow you to take a deep breath in and out.
- Close your eyes.
- Imagine the place in this world where you feel most safe, most secure, most held in the arms of the Almighty.
- Breathe slowly and deeply while holding that place in your mind.
- Breathe in deeply, “breath of life”
- Breathe out slowly, “breathe on me”
- Repeat

Other examples:

- Inhale: Humble and gentle God, Exhale: You are rest for my soul.
(Matthew 11:28-30)
- Inhale: Nothing can separate me, Exhale: From the love of our God.
(Romans 8:38-39)
- Inhale: Let me be still, Exhale: And know that You are God.
(Psalm 46:10)
- Inhale: Your grace, O Lord, Exhale: Is enough for me.
(2 Corinthians 12:9)
- Inhale: I will not be afraid, Exhale: For you are with me.
(Psalm 23)
- Inhale: You surround me with love, Exhale: and tender mercies.
(Psalm 103:4)
- Inhale: Peace of Christ, Exhale: Guard my heart and mind.
(Philippians 4:7)

Invitation

Practise Breath Prayer daily using an example above or creating your own.

Adaptation for Families

Blow bubbles using long, slow and controlled breaths.

Breathe in: grown up says out loud "Jesus loves us"

Breath out: child blows bubbles. Grown up says out loud

"now and always."

NOTES
