

The Journey Project Reflection and Discussion Guide

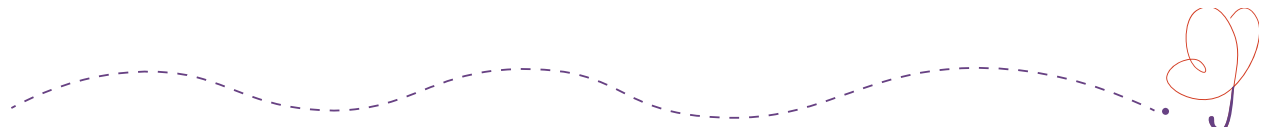


**A Study Created by the
New Mexico Conference of Churches
through the Lilly Endowment for
Thriving Congregations
LARGE PRINT EDITION**

**An eight week study including eight group studies and
fifty-six daily personal devotions**

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The Jewish Traveler's Prayer
(Tefillat Haderech)

"May it be Your will, Adonai, My God and God of my ancestors, to lead me,
to direct my steps, and to support
me in peace.

Lead me in life, tranquil and serene,
until I arrive at where I am going.

Deliver me from every enemy, ambush and hurt
that I might encounter on the way and
from all afflictions that visit and trouble
the world.

Bless the work of my hands.

Let me receive divine grace and those loving acts of
kindness and mercy in Your eyes and in the
eyes of all those I encounter.

Listen to the voice of my appeal,
for You are a God who responds to prayerful supplication.

Praised are You, Adonai,
who responds to prayer.

-Amen.



The Journey Project

Introduction

The Journey Project is a program created to support local faith communities and leaders across the state of New Mexico. This Lilly-funded program includes quarterly educational and informative sessions, an annual retreat for parish clergy, an annual pilgrimage in the state of New Mexico, and an eight-week group and personal study guide. These events are meant to engage congregations and faith leaders, provide connection among congregants, and to strengthen the churches in our area.

This study guide includes eight group gatherings to reflect upon and discuss eight journeys recorded in the scriptures. Each study is an opportunity to reflect upon one's personal spiritual journey as well as reflect upon the journey of the faith community. The group sessions include reading the scripture passage about a particular journey, using the Lectio Divina method, prayers, and discussion questions. There is also a "Walk About" section, offering a suggestion for a short journey somewhere close to the faith community. And finally, there is a section entitled, "For your Consideration and Action," which provides an idea of how to incorporate the theme of that week into personal and community action. In between the two journeys sharing the same theme, there are reflections meant to deepen the ideas of the four thematic journeys: The Journey to Community, The Journey to Reconciliation, The Journey to Peace, and the Journey to Generosity.

The second part of this guide includes daily devotions for personal use for eight weeks. This is an opportunity for journaling and reflection, prayer and meditation for individuals involved in the group study. Each day includes a passage from the most extensive journey story in the sacred texts, the Exodus, a reflection on the scripture, a prayer, and a pilgrimage posture. These activities offer the participant daily opportunities to consider how the sacred story of the journey of the Children of Israel intersect with one's own spiritual journey.

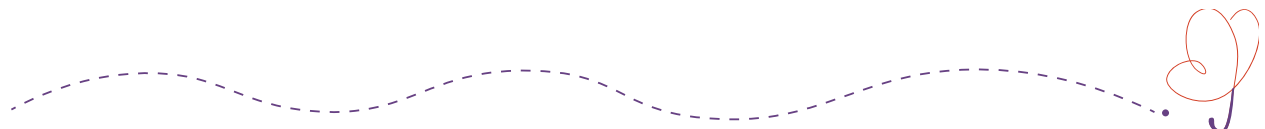
The scriptures quoted in this guide are from the NRSV translation and all material has been written by Lynne Hinton and Randall Partin. Editorial assistance

was given by Janet Lynn Taylor and Patti Dailey. Graphics were designed by Saira Herrera Gamboa.

It is the hope and mission of the New Mexico Conference of Churches in this Journey Project to provide support, inspiration, and encouragement to faith leaders and church members across the state of New Mexico. We recognize the difficult time churches are presently facing and we seek to provide you companionship as we journey together, heeding Christ's call to serve one another.

May God grant you guidance, courage, and strength as you embark upon this journey with members of your own faith community and alongside others walking the journey of faith.

For more information about The Journey Project and where to order more books, visit our website at www.nmchurches.org or contact Lynne at 505.243.6234.



The Journey Project Group Study



How to Use the Group Study Guide:

1. Have Bibles available for group members. Read the Journey Passage listed for that week. Follow the instructions for a Lectio Divina study including three readings of the passage, followed by silence, and then offering responses to the questions in the guide.
2. Pray the Unison Prayer together.
3. Someone will read the paragraphs giving context to the passage.
4. A group facilitator will ask the discussion questions as a means to prompt conversation about the scripture passage, one's personal spiritual journey, and the journey of the faith community involved in the study.
5. The Walk-About section is read aloud. This activity might be one that the group plans to do together or it can simply be left to the individuals to find a time and place to complete.
6. The Consideration and Action section is read aloud followed by discussion about how best to respond to the suggestions.
7. Someone will lead the Closing Prayer.



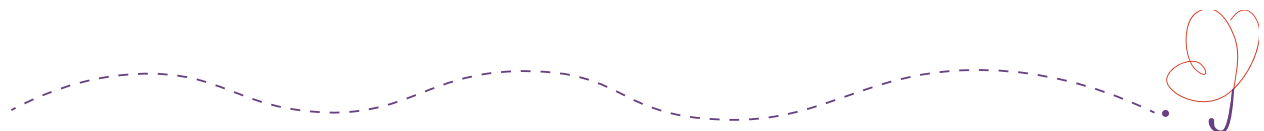
The Journey Project

Personal Daily Devotions



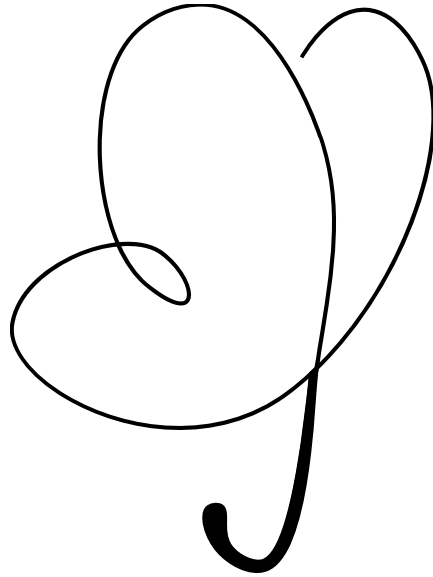
How to Use the Personal Daily Devotions:

1. Read the scripture passage listed.
2. Read the reflection and use the pages provided in this guide to make your response.
3. Read the prayer provided.
4. Incorporate the pilgrimage posture for each day.

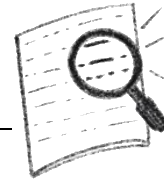


The Journey Project

Group Study



**The Journey Project
Group Study
Week One: The Journey to Community
First Path
Ruth and Naomi**



THE READING

Scripture: Ruth 1:1-18

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.



A bit of context about this story:

The whole scope of scripture can be viewed essentially as a journey narrative—the ongoing journeying of God’s people through God’s world. Within that big-arc storyline of a journey, the book of Ruth provides a particularly singular vignette: a story of women who find themselves widowed, displaced, and entirely at the edges and ragged margins of a world through which they must navigate alone. But they are not alone. Ruth makes the conscious and consequential choice (in her powerful speech in verses 16-17) to accompany her mother-in-law Naomi on the potentially perilous journey into an unknown and uncertain future. And that choice makes all the difference, both for Naomi and Ruth, but as we will see at the end of the book of Ruth, for all of God’s people. It is because of Ruth’s choice to accompany Naomi (and through Naomi’s accompaniment and encouragement of Ruth) that Ruth bears a son to Boaz, Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, who would be king, the man after God’s own heart.

There are times when circumstances bring about a journeying, a “wandering in the wilderness” that feels as if it is helplessly and hopelessly beyond our individual choices or considerations. In Ruth and Naomi’s case it was famine and the tragic loss of their loved ones. These are things that happen that are beyond our choice or control, as many things in life are sometimes. In the story of Ruth and Naomi, however, we learn that even in the midst of those unwelcome or unchosen wanderings, choice and agency still matter. The choice to accompany each other. The choice not to travel alone (or let another travel alone). The choice to risk and to be vulnerable. And that makes all the difference, in our journey, in the journeys of others, indeed, in the journey of all of us.

Four Discussion Questions



1. What do you think about Ruth’s decision to follow her mother-in-law? What does this story of these two women bring up for you?
2. Has there ever been anyone in your life that you followed when they were taking a journey? Have you ever tagged along with someone?

3. How do you define loyalty?
4. How does your church support those who are grieving? What programs or offerings for those who have suffered losses have been part of your church's history?

Walk About



This week, walk around a cemetery. Consider the lives now gone and the family members and loved ones who are left to carry on without them. Think about the people in your life who are no longer with you and consider the people who walked with you through that grief.

For Your Consideration and Action

Think of someone in your community who has recently suffered a loss. Consider how you might show them care and concern this week. Perhaps you pray for them. Perhaps you contact them and let them know you are thinking of them. Maybe you take them out for a meal or bring some act of kindness into their lives.

Closing Prayer



God, we are grateful for the companions who walk with us through life. We are grateful for friends and family members who refuse to see us walk alone. Especially in our grief, when we feel lost, when we only see ourselves as having been dealt with bitterly, we are grateful for the people in our lives who will not let us walk alone. Amen.



Journey To Community: Marked as One

It was a gathering of the broken, the bereaved, the sorrowful, coming together for a simple holiday service. As the chaplain for hospice it seemed important to offer a time of remembrance for members of the families of our deceased patients, a chance to say that in light of their recent loss we acknowledge that for them this is no season of happy holidays.

We lit a candle, rang a bell, said prayers, and called out the names of the dead. A few words of comfort were shared, silence, a little piano music, and the giving of small gifts, tree ornaments, doves, the symbol of peace, that were made of rigid green wire and covered in a thin layer of gold glitter.

I had not thought too much about the consequences of giving out things coated in glitter. It had not occurred to me that the decoration was flimsy and would spread from fingers to hair to cheeks and fronts of blouses. But spread it did. So, that after the service, after the sharing of butter cookies and cups of hot cider, handshakes, the gentle conversations, the reunion of beloved hospice staff and the bereaved family members, all of us sparkled with gold glitter. All of us were altered and yet also the same, marked by our grief, marked by our brokenness, marked with tiny lines of glistening gold glitter.

Seeing everyone shining that way touched me. Seeing the Spirit of God break forth in that way surprised me. Of course, it shouldn't have. We are all broken, after all. We all face loss; we all grieve. We all deal with disappointment and sadness, often forgetting that as we walk we do so among the wounded. We are all stumbling forward the best we can and it is, I believe, because of our brokenness that we are able to recognize the sorrow and grief of others. It is in our own frail attempts to move beyond the sadness that we are able to see so many others struggling beside us. And somehow, the sharing of this commonality brings us a measure of peace, of hope, a silver lining in the dark and overwhelming bank of clouds that cover us. Or as it was at this hospice memorial service on this recent mild December day in a little town in western New Mexico, tiny lines of gold glitter marking us all as one.

- Lynne

The Journey Project
Group Study
Week Two: The Journey to Community
Second Path
Mary to Elizabeth



THE READING

Scripture: Luke 1:39-45

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.

A bit of context about this story:

One of the most profound “journeys” anyone can experience is the joyful—and often terrifying—journey of welcoming new life into God’s world through a pregnancy. In this passage from the gospel according to Luke, we enter into the story of the birth of Jesus immediately after the visitation—the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary announcing that she will bear a child through the Holy

Spirit. Part of that announcement is the revelation that Mary's cousin Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son. According to Luke, on the heels of this earth-shattering visitation, Mary sets out hastily to seek out her cousin Elizabeth. Indeed, as we learn in verse 56, Mary remains with her cousin for about three months.

Scripture can be frustratingly opaque when it comes to the motivations behind the choices that characters make in these stories. We do not know, for example, *why* Mary chose to travel to her cousin Elizabeth. Was it to confirm what the angel shared (that Elizabeth had herself become pregnant in spite of her barrenness)? Was it to share her own joyous news? Or was it to seek out the comfort, wisdom, and counsel of a trusted friend, family member, or loved one as Mary faced the prospect of carrying and bearing a child, a child of such great promise and hope? Whatever the motivation, what Mary found in Elizabeth was sheer, unbridled joy and abundant blessings, the shared joy and blessing that comes from connection, companionship, and a shared journey.

Four Discussion Questions



1. Mary journeys to Elizabeth after hearing from the angel that she too is pregnant. How important do you think it is to talk to someone who is going through something similar to what you're going through?
2. What gifts do these cousins bring to each other?
3. Is there anyone in your life that you will contact to share a story and know they will understand? What other gifts does this person bring to your journey?
4. Does your church provide this kind of support? In what ways?

Walk About



Walk around your church. Consider all the people who have walked these halls, sat in these chairs, and the support and companionship that is experienced in a church. Give thanks for this role the church plays in the lives of those who enter.

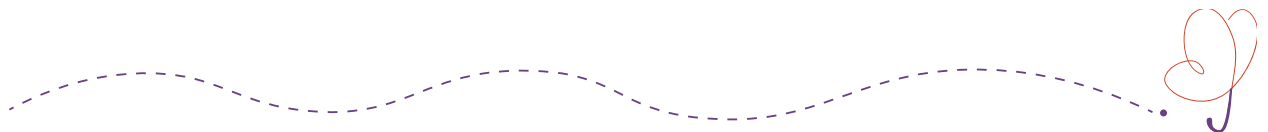
For Your Consideration and Action

Consider the dreams your church now shares. What is "being born" in your community of faith? Find a way to support a new program or offering, help "midwife" this dream within your church by participating in it or encouraging those who do.



Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for the Elizabeths in our lives, for those who will support and encourage us and walk with us. Help us to remember this relationship, this journey of support and help us to provide this care to others. Amen.



The Journey Project
Group Study
Week Three: The Journey to Reconciliation
First Path
Jacob and Esau



THE READING

Scripture: Genesis 32: 22-31

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.

A bit of context about this story:

The book of *Genesis* is thick with journeys—Adam and Eve’s journey from the Garden, Noah and the Ark, and, of course, the formative and determinative travels of Abram and Sarai (Abraham and Sarah), Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. It’s as if this first book in the story of God and God’s people *insists* on setting the stage

that all of this (if not all of life itself, let alone life together with God) is a sort of travel narrative.

In this passage from *Genesis 32*, we catch up with Jacob in the midst of a treacherous effort to return home from a tense, complicated, and extended sojourn with his uncle Laban, from whom he has taken leave under less-than-honest circumstances. He is on the run, fleeing. And what faces him upon a return home is his estranged brother Esau, who has every reason in the world to be less than welcoming. In other words, Jacob is traveling a razor's edge, with a certain threat behind him and a worrisome threat ahead of him.

Significantly, at this point in the story, Jacob is completely and utterly alone, having sent his family and the entire traveling party across the ford at Jabbok. But Jacob is *not* alone. He wrestles all night with a stranger. The stranger hobbles Jacob, but ultimately blesses him and—significantly—renames Jacob (the “supplanter”) to Israel (“contends with God”). And, immediately after, when Jacob/Israel meets his brother Esau (*Genesis 33:1-4*), Esau runs to meet him and falls on his neck, weeping. Jacob's trepidatious fears of what awaits him at home after this long, circuitous journey are ultimately unfounded, and what he finds instead are welcome, forgiveness, and peace. As with any journey, the outcome is never certain, and what we fear (or even, perhaps, what we hope) may not be what awaits us.

Four Discussion Questions



1. What do you think this wrestling match was about?
2. What does it take to reconcile when a relationship has soured?
3. Is there a place you no longer journey to because of bad memories?
4. When Jacob finally does encounter Esau, the older brother embraces him and receives him with a great outpouring of love. How well do you think your church offers this kind of grace and reception? What activities or offerings might the church provide that increase this kind of reconciliation and reception?

Walk About



This week find a part of your town or community where you are not that comfortable walking. Be safe, of course, but let yourself feel that feeling of being a bit out of place. Feel the struggle of walking in a part of town that causes you to want to retreat, leave. Think about how it feels to walk while also feeling a struggle within your spirit.

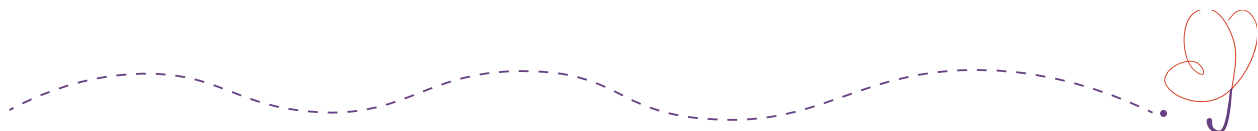
For Your Consideration and Action

Think of someone who is no longer active in your faith community, someone or ones who have left. Perhaps they got mad or found another community. It's likely you don't know the whole story; but you do know that they are now gone. Pray for them this week and if you feel led, just write them a note to let them know they are missed.



Closing Prayer

God, how do we even begin to say thank you for forgiveness, for mercy, for being allowed back into the place we left in fear or anger? Thank you for the reconciliation and restoration we have experienced along our journeys and strengthen and encourage us to make more. Amen.



The Journey to Reconciliation: Family Love

It was my brother's birthday last week. I texted him some silly meme with a dancing mariachi band and sent him a Spanish language card because neither of us speaks Spanish and it just seemed like a funny thing to do. We don't talk that often. Not because of conflict or estrangement, even though he has taken a conservative religious path while I walk an entirely different one.

After having spoken to my brother, however, I've been thinking about him and how it is always kindness that colors my memories of him. Three years older, he never took the role of belligerent or spiteful big brother. There were no practical jokes or cruel treatment. We played together as children and when he was a teenager, he was helpful and attentive to his little sister; and I am grateful for that.

I have also been thinking of my brother because of the two brothers we served in hospice, one a patient, one a spouse of a patient. Brothers who live less than an hour from each other and who haven't seen one another in decades.

It was their art work that made me think they might be related. The creative pieces that captured my attention before I even realized that they shared the same last name. They both make beautiful art, sculptures, wooden figures, placed inside walking sticks and canes. It's the same design for them both, taught to both of them, they tell me, by a parent.

So what happens to siblings that create art exactly the same but find themselves with such distance between them? What pulls brother away from brother? Causes a rift or a break or just creates neglect that somehow starts with a few weeks of not speaking and somehow slowly turns into years and then decades?

It is after all, with our siblings that we are given our first opportunities to live in community, opportunities for collaboration and fidelity and socialization; but unfortunately, also opportunities for jealousy, conflict, and blame.

"Mama or Daddy always loved you more," seems to be a universal temptation for children in a family, be they young or old. The disappointment of never quite getting what is needed tends to create estrangement or a tear so long and deep in the fabric of kinship that it can never quite get sewn back up.

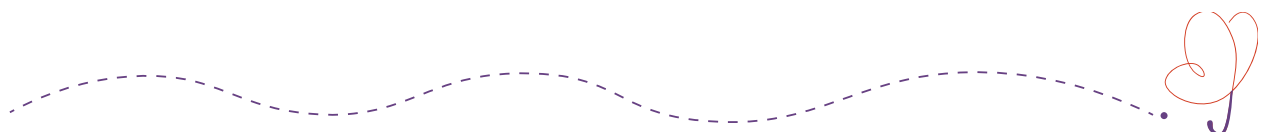
And those of us Judea-Christian types who turn to our sacred texts for guidance, certainly don't find many stories that shine a positive or good light on the relationships of siblings. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Mary and Martha, none of these dyads give us much hope for a loyal and meaningful relationship between brothers or sisters.

Maybe some families never give the children a fighting chance to draw close. Maybe the dysfunction is just too dysfunctional. Maybe the poverty or abuse or neglect or harm done by parents or families born into generations of brokenness cannot be overturned. It's hard to say.

I never asked the brothers what happened; that is their story if they wish to share it. I can only hope that if reconciliation is their desire that it comes before a death.

Perhaps, like a greeting card written in another language, not completely understood or comprehensible to either, a language of forgiveness and a language of reunion might be shared by the artists. Perhaps for these brothers, a love deeper than what they have known, a love bigger than their hurts and disappointments, will bind them together once again; and like the Good Shepherd's staff, lead them on their last journeys together, brothers once again.

- Lynne



The Journey Project
Group Study
Week Four: The Journey to Reconciliation
Second Path
Joseph and His Brothers



THE READING

Scripture: Genesis 37:18-28

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.

A bit of context about this story:

In Genesis 37, we enter into the story of God's people with the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob (and grandson of Isaac, great-grandson of Abraham), who is sold into slavery by his brothers. Joseph's wayfaring story eventually places all the descendants of the patriarch Jacob as residents in Egypt, where (after Joseph had been long forgotten) they would become bitterly enslaved and, then, in

one of the most dramatic travel narratives ever, they would be delivered from bondage in Egypt and to the Promised Land through the Exodus.

Unfortunately, though, like too many journeys that too many others are forced into, Joseph's journey is not one he makes by his own choice. He did not choose this particular trip. Indeed, it is the shocking, devastating, and cruel choice of Joseph's own brothers to sell him into slavery that precipitates this particular travel narrative. Along the way, Joseph encounters both opportunities and setbacks, challenges and choices, and, ultimately, his gifts, wisdom, and character (and choices) allow Joseph to rise to an unprecedented place of power alongside the pharaoh. From that position of privilege, Joseph is able to not only provide for his family (who find themselves forced into a journey because of a famine), but, more importantly, to become reconciled with those who wronged him so many years ago and set him on this particular path. Indeed, Joseph is able to powerfully proclaim in *Genesis 50:20* that this meandering journey he had been on—what his brothers might have intended for harm—God intended for good. Such is the way that God is able to work through our journeys as well, however we may find ourselves traveling.

Four Discussion Questions



1. This is not an easy story to hear: brothers selling their own family member into slavery, lying to their father, breaking his heart with the news. Why do you think this story is included in our sacred texts?
2. How do you think about the evil acts of others? How do you experience God in the face of evil?
3. Later, when Joseph faces his brothers again in Egypt, years after they have sold him and he has risen up the ranks in the court of Pharaoh, he tells them that what they intended for harm, God intended for good. What does this passage say to you?

4. Has there ever been any conversation at your church about forgiveness? How well do you think the church body does at teaching the value of forgiveness?



Walk About

This week walk around the courthouse, police station, or jail. Think about all the evil acts committed that have been reported here, and all those who are affected by poor or harmful choices of others. Consider all victims who have suffered at the hands of someone, faced the consequences of someone else's evil choices.

For Your Consideration and Action

How can you support your church's actions around racial justice? Can you suggest a program or book study or some offering to lead your faith community in conversations about reconciliation across racial lines?

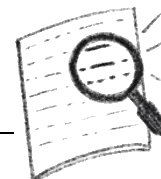


Closing Prayer

Dear God, Joseph went through so much and yet was able to keep his faith, keep up his spirits and thrive. Help us to remember Joseph even as we may be forced to take the journey someone else places us on, even when we must walk in the valley of the shadow of someone else's evil choices. Help us to seek the good that we know you can bring about. Amen.



The Journey Project
Group Study
Week Five: The Journey to Peace
First Path
The Children of Israel in Babylon



THE READING

Scripture: Psalm 137:1-6

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.

A bit of context about this story:

In the grand story of God's people that we encounter in scripture, there are two distinct and profound overarching "journey" narratives that shape the whole story. The first is the Exodus, the deliverance of God's people from slavery in Egypt. The second is the Exile, the disruption and displacement of large numbers of people in the 6th century BCE, many of whom were forced to relocate to live as

refugees in Babylon. That displacement and exile is the historical and literary context that shapes the beginning lines of Psalm 137 ("By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept . . .").

For many of us, the scale and scope of the Exile experience is simply unfathomable. Archeological evidence has shown that much of Jerusalem was reduced to rubble in 587 BCE with huge portions of the once-glorious capital city remaining in ruins for more than a century. Historians estimate that 10% - 22% of the entire population of Judah had been carted off to live in Babylon. It is the anguished voice of these exiles and refugees, then, that we should hear in this particular passage. Moreover, it is the grieving hearts of these exiles and refugees who (we hear) are then taunted to sing the songs of their people, songs that seem out of place in such a strange and foreign land.

And yet, whether or not these exiles submit to the taunts of their captors and sing their songs like caged birds (it is not clear from the text), the song is not stilled, will not be stilled. The Psalmist intimates that while the outward circumstances of their exile may be humiliating or dire, they did not forget the songs or the glory of God. Inwardly, they remember. Inwardly, they keep hope and inwardly, they kept the song alive.

Four Discussion Questions



1. How do you think the Israelites were feeling when they were taunted to sing after they had been exiled?
2. How would you rate America in offering acceptance to those who are displaced?
3. Have you ever felt displaced? Exiled? Pushed from your home? What helped you through this time?
4. What does your church do for those who are displaced or exiled?

Walk About



This week find a place that celebrates a culture other than your own. Visit a museum showing, a grocery store specializing in foods from other countries, a bookstore or section in a store with books written in languages other than English. Find a place where you don't recognize the labels or items on display. Imagine how it must be for those who are not from America finding their way around a place that is not home.

For Your Consideration and Action

Find one bill or legislative action you can support on the issue of asylum seeking or immigration. Write a letter to a representative asking for their support.

Closing Prayer



God, our sacred texts are filled with stories of people being exiled. Even Jesus was born to immigrant parents. Help us to find compassion for those who feel displaced, who are far from home. Help us to provide support to all those who are looking for a home. Amen.



"The Journey to Peace: Everything is Good with my Heart"

"Todo está bien con mi corazón." "*Everything is good with my heart.*" This is the statement a ninety-six year old hospice patient loved to say to his family and friends whenever they stopped in to visit. As Mr. Vallejo's chaplain, I wondered how it was that he could deliver this line with such confidence and ease. What influenced the retired uranium miner to be able to say such a thing?

I know that it was certainly not that he had an easy life; he was widowed at the age of sixty, outlived a son and a grandson and he was a man who struggled with many physical infirmities; and yet, this was the phrase that summed up his life. "Everything is good with my heart."

So, what was it about this guy? What made him so content? I was thinking of my patient this week and here are some things I remember about him.

Mr. Vallejo was a man of joy. Before his funeral, I sat with the family and heard many stories of how he used to make everyone laugh, how he loved to tell jokes, how he never took himself or life too seriously. It was easy to see the influence he had on his many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even great-great grandchildren as they all stood around the grave after the committal, singing the old song, "Found a Peanut." I'm not sure that all the adults in the family thought it was such an appropriate grave song to sing; but knowing Mr. Vallejo as I did and hearing how funny he was all of his life, I can only imagine that he not only inspired the song, he was somewhere listening to them and laughing.

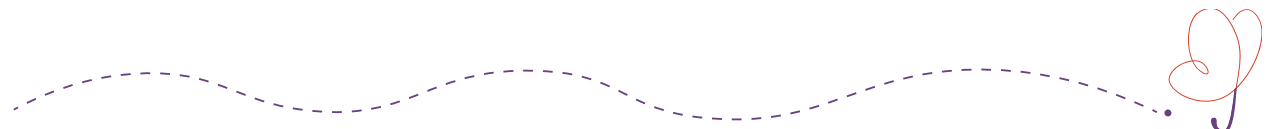
Perhaps Mr. Vallejo was also able to say that everything was good with his heart because he had faith. He would say to me every time I came to see him, "I'm waiting." And I would ask, "Waiting for what?" And he would smile and say, "The next thing." Mr. Vallejo loved life but he knew something better was waiting for him beyond this world. He had a satisfied soul because he had faith. He knew he was a child of God. He knew that he was not forsaken.

And the last thing I know about my patient that possibly contributed to his sunny disposition was that he loved the little ones. His family told me that when he was out and about town he would stop and talk to children; he wanted to know about their lives. He was interested in them, honored them. They shared with me

how he went out of his way to get to know children, how he saw them as God's precious ones.

Mr. Vallejo was not rich. He lived in a very modest home and had few treasures. He was not very well-educated, having taught himself to read as an adult. But it turns out Mr. Vallejo didn't need very much because he had the greatest gift of all. He lived life fully and well and he died without regret. "Todo esta bien con mi Corazón," he told us before he died; and surely, there is nothing better than that.

- Lynne



The Journey Project
Group Study
Week Six: The Journey to Peace
Second Path
Mary Magdalene Goes to the Grave



THE READING

Scripture: John 20:11-18

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.

A bit of context about this story:

The journey to Jesus' tomb must have been unquestionably difficult. Never mind the risk that Mary had taken to visit the tomb in the first place, but the shock and horror of the past few days hung like a shadow over every step, every turn along the way. Jesus was dead, brutally executed by the established powers of the day, including the religious leaders but (importantly) the all-mighty Roman

empire. Anyone connected to Jesus was automatically suspect, if not indeed complicit in the same crimes for which he faced the ultimate punishment. Not surprising, then, that Mary (according to John's gospel) travels to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark. What is surprising, however, is what she finds—an empty tomb—and she rushes to Simon Peter and another disciple to report what she has found. They then rush to the tomb but (curiously) return to where they were staying upon confirming the report from Mary that Jesus was gone. Meanwhile, Mary herself has returned to the tomb (there is a lot of journeying back and forth in this story, isn't there?) where all she can do is sit and weep and keep checking the place where Jesus had lain, as if to confirm or convince herself that it (all of it) is still painfully true.

In this beautiful act of storytelling, we are given a scene where Mary is traveling to and fro. She travels with all of the fearfulness and uncertainty of what has just happened and (indeed) what is happening even in the midst of her traveling back and forth. She sees Jesus but does not recognize him. It's as if she *thinks* she's traveling a certain path, but suddenly things are not quite what they seem, the road is not as predictable or as certain as she imagined. She is (and we are) on the greatest "detours" ever encountered: the Resurrection.

Four Discussion Questions



1. What do you think Mary thought she would find at the grave?
2. Why do you think she doesn't recognize Jesus?
3. Have you ever been reunited with someone you thought was gone forever?
How was that reunion?
4. How does your community of faith demonstrate Resurrection? What is your favorite part of Easter celebrations at your church?

Walk About



Find a labyrinth somewhere near you. Churches and retreat centers will often have labyrinths. Locate one and walk it. Breathe in the news that what you thought was dead is alive, what you had given up on is not gone.

For Your Consideration and Action

What is something that others think is dead or not worth saving in your faith community? Maybe it's a room in the church that needs cleaning and decluttering, a space for something new. Maybe it's a program that's been sidelined because of a lack of interest. Is there anything in your place of worship that needs renewing?



Closing Prayer

This is a journey from sorrow to hope, from brokenness to healing, from death to life. Thank you for this story of Mary finding Jesus and of Jesus finding her. May we live out his Resurrection story in all our journeys. Amen.

The Journey Project
Group Study
Week Seven: The Journey to Generosity
First Path
Elijah



THE READING

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:1-9

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.

A bit of context about this story:

In this story, Elijah is on the run, fearing for his life. On the heels of his dramatic and extraordinary victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah realizes he has run afoul of the powerful queen Jezebel, and she convincingly threatens to assassinate him. Elijah is terrified and alone, convinced that all of his faithfulness and all of his service and all of his efforts are for naught. His journey is as much inward as it

is outward. He is taking on a sort of self-imposed exile, but he is also (clearly) wrestling inwardly with his place, his identity, his purpose. Out there, in the wilderness, he is wandering through his thoughts and wondering if any of it matters at all, if he matters at all.

But clearly, he *does* matter. Clearly, in spite of all of Elijah's negative self-talk, he is *not* hopelessly and aimlessly alone out there in the wilderness. Out there, an angel visits him, comforts him, feeds him, and encourages him (twice!). Based on that emotional and physical nourishment, he travels onward to the mountain of God, where (we learn later), God commissions him with even more purpose-filled work and, significantly, the task of appointing a successor to his own mission. Elijah is not aimlessly fleeing into an uncertain future, but clearly finding his way in and into God's wider dream for the world.

Four Discussion Questions



1. Have you ever been so afraid you just ran and hid? What was that experience like for you?
2. What is the lesson for you of how God comes to Elijah in the wilderness? How is God generous to Elijah?
3. Has there ever been anyone who came to you when you were lost like Elijah and brought you food or comfort?
4. What does your church do to feed the hungry? How does your church support initiatives that deal with hunger?

Walk About



This week walk into a place that serves food. Maybe it's a bakery or restaurant or grocery store. Notice all of the foods we have to share that comfort and inspire. Think of your favorite foods and consider the times in your life that someone showed up with something to eat for you because they knew you were struggling.

For Your Consideration and Action

Select an item of food to share with someone who may be facing a difficult time. Bake or cook it yourself or buy something meaningful. Share something with someone who may need a little encouragement today.

Closing Prayer



God, sometimes the journeys we take are journeys running away from something that has frightened us or saddened us. Sometimes we just want to get out and away. Thank you for the ways you came to Elijah and thank you for the ways you come to us. Amen.



The Journey to Generosity: The Greatest Gift

I was twenty when my grandmother died. Her name was Lessie Alford and she was the oldest of ten children, born to a farmer in eastern North Carolina. She was also, according to everyone who knew her, a saint.

She didn't make the news or have wealth or fame. She was not important in politics or church history books. She didn't invent any great medical cure or write a great treatise. She was a school teacher, a Sunday School teacher, a farmer, a neighbor, a wife and mother and grandmother. And she was the kindest, most loving, faithful person I have ever known.

After her death, the family gathered to divide Grandmother's few belongings. My sister chose her quilts. My cousins wanted some of her pots and pans and the sewing machine. My mother wanted to keep her wedding rings, her mother's few pieces of jewelry. My dad asked for her Bible and my brother wanted a few pictures. When I was asked, I chose my grandmother's mirror. It was part of a set but I don't remember what happened to the brush and comb. The mirror has a long handle, gold-plated, with a well-faded fabric backing. Like my grandmother, on the surface, it does not look that remarkable.

For more than forty years I have never really understood why I wanted the mirror. After all, I never remember my grandmother actually using it. She was never one to wear much make-up or worry too much about her looks. She was definitely not vain; she rarely checked a mirror and I don't recall that this mirror was that significant to her. And yet, I have always known that upon Grandmother's death, I desired her mirror. And for all of my adult life, having relocated more times than I can count, I have kept it on my dresser, prominently placed so that it is always near.

A couple of years ago, in spring, during my weekly housecleaning as I was dusting the bedroom furniture, I picked up the mirror and decided to look at myself. I put down the dust rag, held the long handle in my hands and turned it over to see my reflection. And without having any real clear idea of why I was having this revelation at that particular moment, it was just at that time that I finally understood why I chose my grandmother's mirror.

You see, I have never thought of myself as being special or important. In fact, I would have to say that I have spent much of my life feeling inferior,

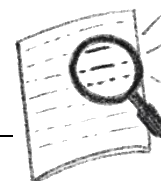
insignificant, not quite good enough. But as I stared at myself in that old and well-worn mirror, I realized that I never felt that way when I was with my grandmother. She always made me feel special and significant and beautiful. She always told me that I could do anything, that I could be anybody. And I realized as I stood looking at myself in my grandmother's mirror, more than forty years after her death, that this was the reason for my choice. This gift meant more than her jewelry or her hand sewn quilts, her sewing machine or even her pictures. I wanted to keep with me my grandmother's image of me for as long as I live. I have always longed to see myself as she saw me. I have always wished to be as generous to myself as she was to me.

This old mirror, this reflection of her love, is truly my greatest gift.

- Lynne



The Journey Project
Group Study
Week Eight: The Journey to Generosity
Second Path
The Wisemen



THE READING

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Have someone read the scripture. Take three minutes of silence and consider what word or phrase speaks to you in this passage. After the time of silence, just share that word or phrase, no explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture again. Take three minutes of silence and consider how this passage might be speaking to your life today. After the time of silence, share this answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Have someone read the scripture for the third time. Take three minutes of silence and consider what God might be saying to you today in this story. After the time of silence, share your answer. No explanation, no discussion.

Close this portion with this prayer said in unison:

Thank you, God, for this story. Thank you for this journey that speaks to my journey today. Amen.

A bit of context about this story:

Woven into Jesus' birth narratives are a number of traveling stories—as we saw earlier, Mary traveled to visit her relative Elizabeth following the announcement that she would become pregnant with the son of the most High, later, Mary and Joseph must travel to Bethlehem to fulfil the census requirements

of the emperor Augustus, the shepherds travel from the hillside to bear witness to the babe wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger, and, of course, according to Matthew's gospel, the wise men (magi) travel from foreign lands in the east to worship and pay homage to the new king of the Jews. We do not know how long they journeyed, but it must have been quite some time, and (clearly) although they knew the general direction they should head, they set out without a precise turn-by-turn itinerary. They show up (unexpectedly) in the court of King Herod, in Jerusalem, but their journey does not end there. Herod deviously sends them to find the Christ-child for his own murderous purposes, but, after paying homage to Jesus, being warned in a dream they "return home by a different way."

The story of the wise men offers a curious insight to travels and journeys—an insight about "why" we travel or undertake a journey, and how we find our way as best we can, and how we avoid pitfalls and detours along the way. A compelling component of the wise men's journey is how they kept faith with the journey. They knew why they traveled, and they persisted in their purpose, even so far as to return home once they achieved their intended aim—to pay homage to Christ. Although they did not have a turn-by-turn itinerary, nothing would steer them off their intended path.

Four Discussion Questions



1. What do you find appealing about the story of the Magi? How are they generous to themselves and to Jesus?
2. Have you ever taken a journey based on a dream you had or a call or deep desire to go somewhere, visit or call someone?
3. How important are dreams to you in your spiritual life?
4. What does the last part of the story, the willingness to go home by another way teach a church about flexibility? How flexible do you consider your church?

Walk About



Find a place to walk in nature. Walk a path or part of a trail that is not familiar to you. Practice safety but also consider walking a new way, a new path, going in a different direction than the one that is most familiar to you.

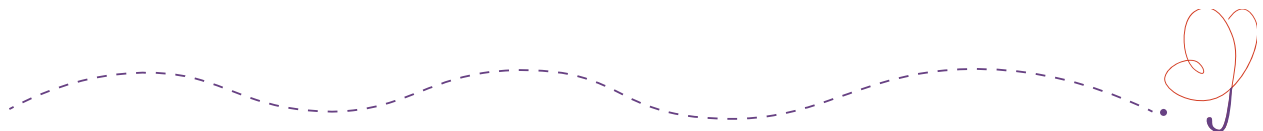
For Your Consideration and Action

How does your church practice generosity? How does your church support dreams of those in your midst? Find one program that embodies the journey of generosity and participate in it this week.

Closing Prayer



Thank you, *God*, for visions and dreams, for speaking to your people in ways unexpected. Strengthen us to be willing to try new things, journey in different ways, learn new lessons. Help us to be flexible and generous and willing to listen to your voice that speaks in many ways. Amen.



God of the mountain, may I stand firmly upon your faithfulness.

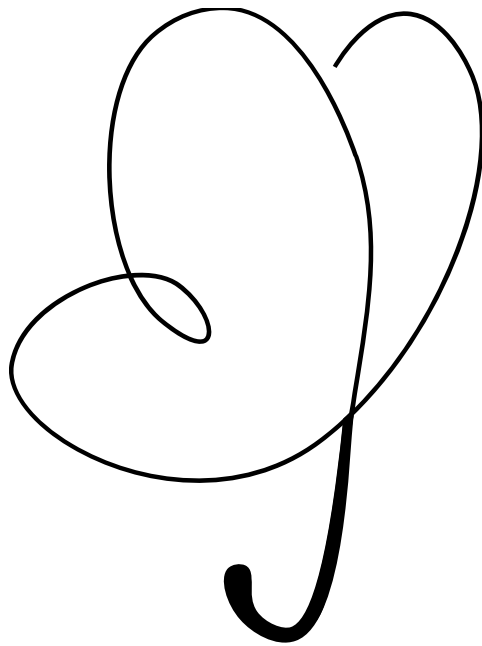
God of the river, may I remember all things are flowing.

God of the sky, may I honor light and darkness.

God of the tree, may I remain connected to all things in love.



**The Journey Project
Eight Week Study
Daily Devotions**



Daily Devotions

Week One, Day One

Read Exodus 1:1-10



"Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." (Exodus 1:8)

Reflection

Have you ever been in a place or situation where the leadership changed, where the way things used to be done, the relationships you valued, were unknown? Have you ever felt as if the people who knew you, loved you, treasured you, are now no longer surrounding you?

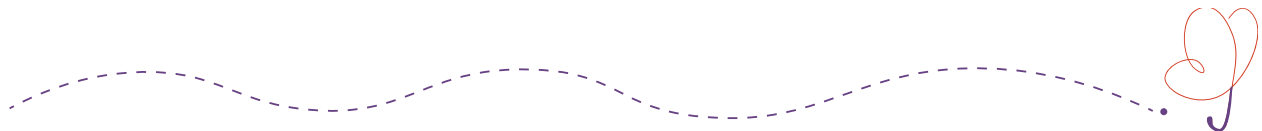
How does it feel to be "unknown?" How does it feel for the former things to have passed away and to be in a place, with people, who seem unfamiliar and as if they do not know you?

Write three things that are important that others know about you.

1.

2.

3.



Week One, Day One



Prayer

God, help me to remember there are those in my life who do not know where I have been, what I have done. Help me to be patient with those who have no idea of my history and who may appear insensitive or ignorant. Lead me to gratitude when my life is surrounded by those who truly know me, and grant me kindness when surrounded by those who do not. Help me be willing to make room for new relationships and be willing to share my history. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Inside: Find a possession that speaks to your identity, symbolizes how you define yourself. Find a comfortable place to sit inside your home and contemplate on this item. Try to recall the origins of this item. Hold it in your hands and examine it. What does this item say about you? Close your eyes and give thanks for how this possession helps define you.



Daily Devotions

Week One, Day Two

Read Exodus 2:15-22

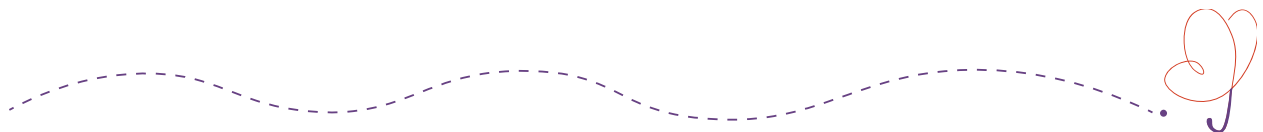


"But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them." (Exodus 2:17a).

Reflection

The midwives were instructed by the Pharaoh to kill all the Hebrew baby boys once they were born; but they refused. They kept them alive. Are there people in your life who have kept you alive? Talked you off the ledge? Gave you a reason to get up in the morning? Protected you? Write a prayer of thanksgiving for that person or persons.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Midwives who Saved Me



Week One, Day Two

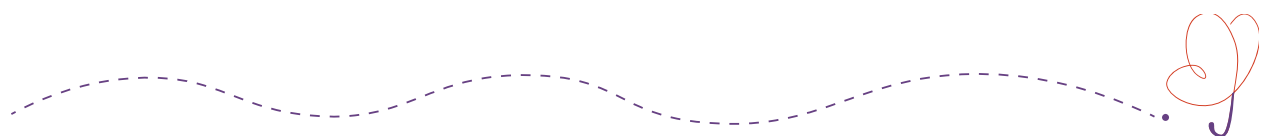
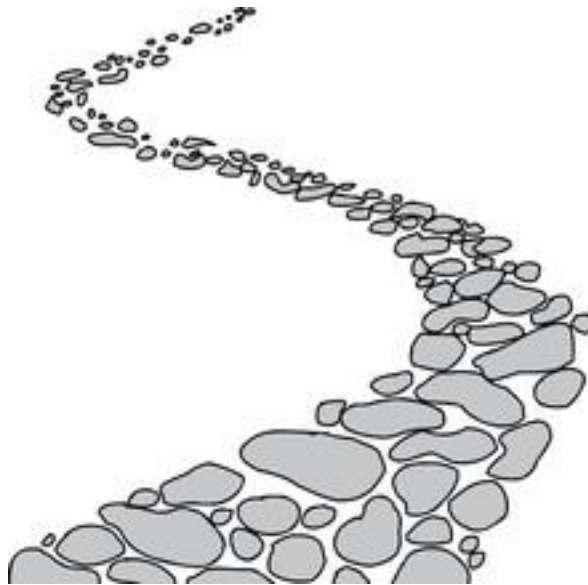


Prayer

God, thank you for sending angels into my life who have protected me from harm and saved my life. Thank you for sending me grace in the lives of people who care about me. Let my life reflect their service by sharing that gift of protection and love to others. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

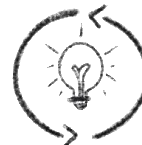
Sitting Outside: Find a comfortable place to sit outside. Maybe you stay in your own yard or venture somewhere else. Take a few deep breaths and look around you. What do you see? What sounds do you hear? Let the place you are sitting inspire you, comfort you. Give God thanks for being able to sit in a place of beauty and rest and safety.



Daily Devotions

Week One, Day Three

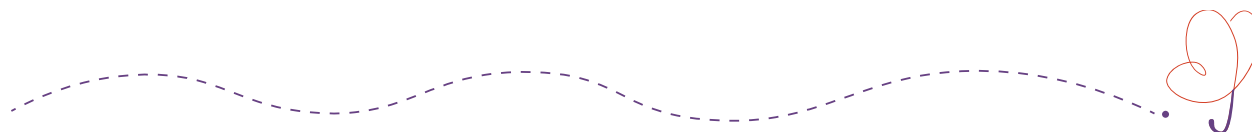
Read Exodus 2:11-23



"I have been an alien residing in a foreign land." (Exodus 2:22b)

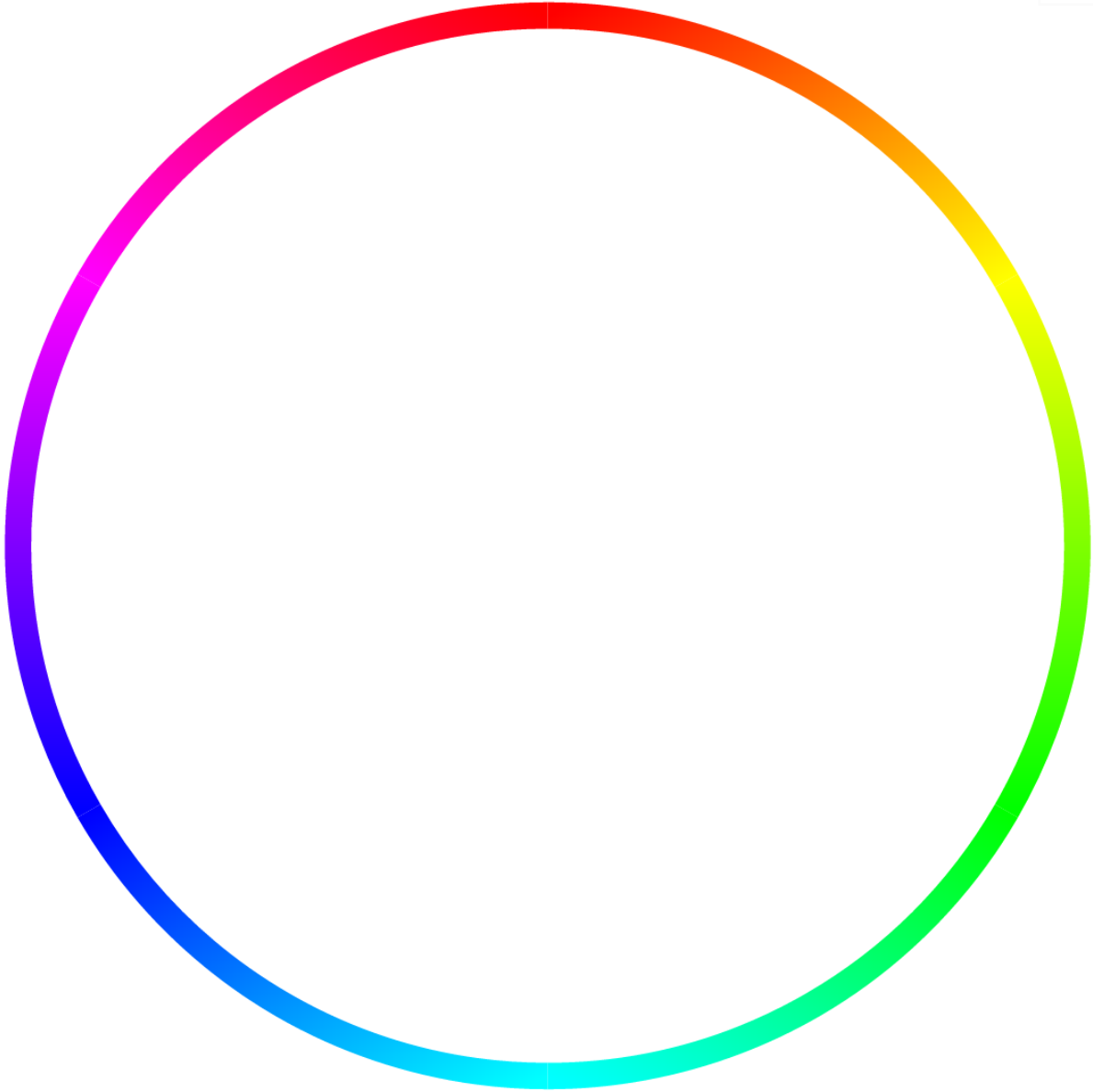
Reflection

Have you ever felt like an alien? Have you ever resided in a foreign land? Inside the large circle on the following page, a mandala, write the feelings you experienced when you were like Moses, an alien residing in a foreign land. Write all the emotions that speak to how it felt not to belong.



The Un-belonging Mandala

Result



Week One, Day Three

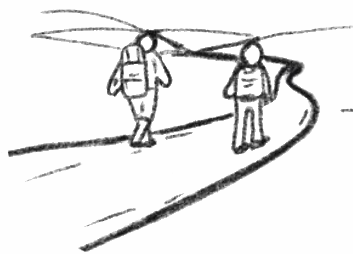


Prayer

God, as I reflect upon the times in my life when I felt displaced, an alien, help me to be mindful of others who are feeling that way today. Help me to be attentive to those who are not at home, not comfortable, those who struggle to find their place. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

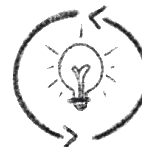
Standing Inside: Plant your feet firmly on the floor. Feel the floor beneath you. Stand up tall and place your hands on your heart. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths and then open your eyes. You are safe. You belong. Recognize the gift of belonging, of being home.



Daily Devotions

Week One, Day Four

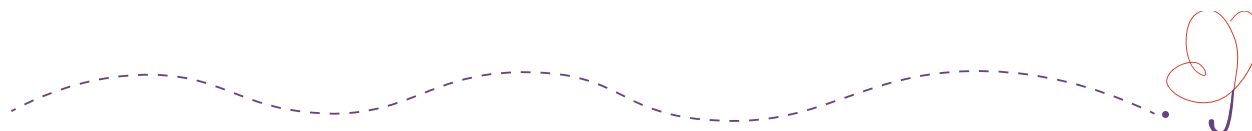
Read Exodus 3:1-4



"When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'" (Exodus 3:4)

Reflection

God spoke to Moses in a burning bush. Have you ever felt God calling you? How do you experience God's leading or calling to you? Write some of the ways God speaks to you.



Ways God Speaks to Me



Week One, Day Four

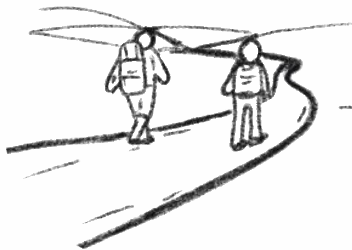


Prayer

God, who calls us from all kinds of unlikely places, thank you for speaking to me. Thank you for this story of Moses to remind me of your voice, of your presence. Help me to be mindful of when you are speaking to me and to be able to respond, 'Here I am.' Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Outside: Go outside, find a place where you can stand comfortably. Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Hold your hands in a prayer posture. Lift your face to the sky and breathe in the air. Listen. Pay attention to the sounds of the day. What do these sounds of life, of nature, say to you about God's presence in your life? Fill your heart and mind with gratitude that you are able to enjoy the sounds from outside.



Daily Devotions

Week One, Day Five

Read Exodus 3:5



"Then God said, 'Come no closer! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'" (Exodus 3:5)

Reflection

Where have you stood on holy ground? Draw or cut and paste pictures that speak of that holy space. Try to recall details of what it feels like to be on sacred ground.



Here is Sacred Ground



Week One, Day Five

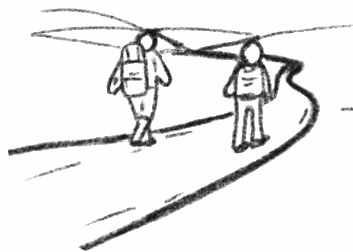


Prayer

Thank you, God for letting me find sacred ground, for letting me recognize the holy. As I walk and live this day, may I find your holiness all around me. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Inside: Ready yourself for a brief walk in your home. Take a few deep breaths and then walk around. Notice the place you live. Walk around each room and be grateful for the privileges you enjoy in your home. Touch surfaces, touch items, and let gratitude fill your heart. Remember the stories of the things you cherish, the items that make your home holy. When you are finished, return to your starting place, take a few deep breaths.



Daily Devotions

Week One, Day Six

Read Exodus 3:7-12



"But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' God said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'" (Exodus 3:12)

Reflection

It is easy to think we are not capable of doing certain things. Perhaps we were told we are not smart enough or strong enough. Perhaps we have let fear and anxiety have control over our decisions to do what may feel hard. Write down a list of five things you feel confident in doing. And then write down a list of five things you find difficult to do.



I am confident doing:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

I find these things difficult:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



Week One, Day Six

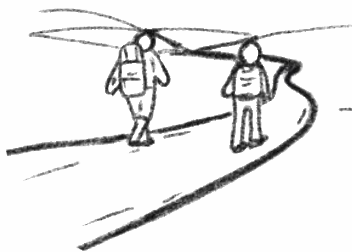


Prayer

God, grant me courage to do what I think I am not able to do. Help me to see myself as you see me, to trust that if I am called to do something, you will be with me to see it through. Help me to do the thing that may feel hard. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Outside: Select a place to go for a five minute walk outside. Maybe you just walk around your home, maybe you go out into your neighborhood. Take a five minute walk outside and pay attention to what is going on around you. Listen for the sounds. See the sights. Notice who lives near you, the activities in your section of town. This is an opportunity to be mindful of your neighborhood, to recognize what is holy about the place you reside.



Daily Devotions

Week One, Day Seven

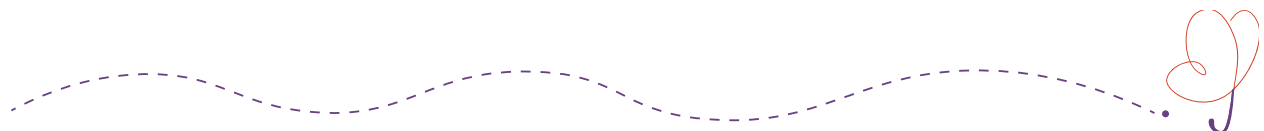


Read Exodus 3:13-15

"God said to Moses, 'I Am Who I Am.'" (Exodus 3:14a)

Reflection

Sometimes God is not what we want, doesn't give the answers we're looking for, doesn't reveal Godself in a way that is easily described or articulated. Draw a symbol for one of the ways you have experienced God.



A Symbol of God



Week One, Day Seven

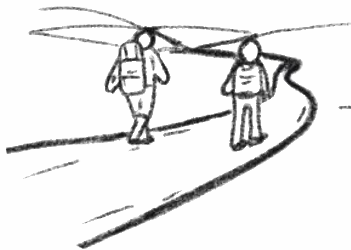


Prayer

God, who simply is what You are, show me the ways I have boxed You in, defined You or made You into my image. Help me to open my heart to experiencing You in new ways. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sabbath: Today is your day of rest. Lie down somewhere comfortable and just relax. God is with you. All is well.



Daily Devotions

Week Two, Day One

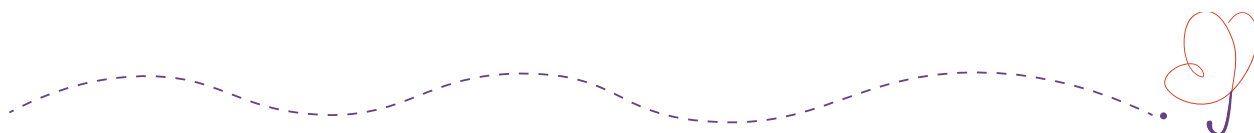
Read Exodus 4:10-13



"But Moses said, 'Oh my Lord, please send someone else.'" (Exodus 4:13)

Reflection

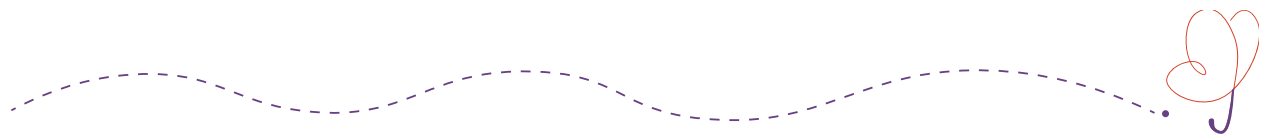
Have you ever been asked to do something you didn't feel qualified to do? Write about a time when you were reluctant to do something you were asked to do. Did you say no or say yes. Did you continue to say no to the invitation or did you power through? How did it feel to make the choice you made? How do you respond to a challenge?



I'm not sure I could do this:

I said no _____ I said yes _____

Ways I respond to a challenge:



Week Two, Day One

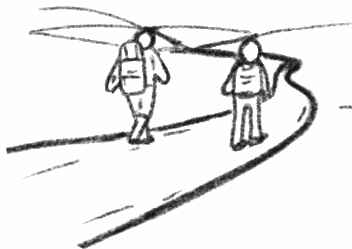


Prayer

God, sometimes I am asked to do something I want to do and I say yes. Sometimes I am asked to do something but I don't feel qualified to do it. And sometimes I am asked to do something I don't want to do. Help me in discernment to know the challenges I should face, the things I could do that will deepen my faith or stretch me where I need stretching. And help me to know when to say no. Grant me wisdom to understand when to say yes and when to say no. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Inside: Find a place to sit where you can stretch. Start with your neck and shoulders, stretch from side to side. Raise your hands above your head. Stretch them as high as you can. Stretch out your legs. Point and flex your toes. Take a few deep breaths and consider what it means to stretch. How can your body teach you about flexibility? Give thanks for the ways you can stretch and grow.



Daily Devotions

Week Two, Day Two

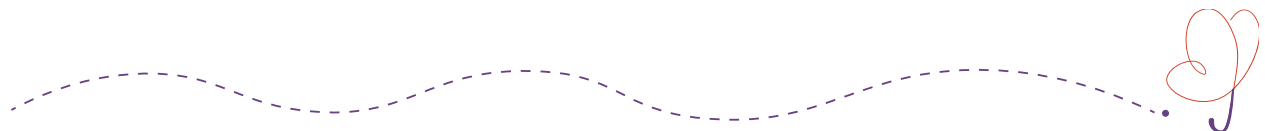
Read Exodus 4:14-17



"What of your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad."
(Exodus 4:14b)

Reflection

Make a list of the people in your life who have helped you, those who have spoken for you, encouraged you or stepped up for you. Give God thanks for these "Aarons" in your life.



Thank you for those who Have Spoken Up or Encouraged me

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



Week Two, Day Two

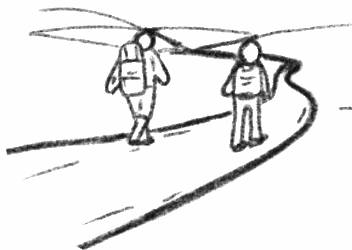


Prayer

God, I cannot do this life alone. I must have the assistance and support of brothers and sisters. Thank you for those who have stood up for me, spoken for me, cared for me. Thank you for bringing these people into my life and help me to pay these gifts of encouragement and advocacy forward. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Outside: Find a favorite place to sit outside, a seat with a favorite view or a place that brings you peace. Sit comfortably and think of places where you have sat outside and enjoyed beauty. Think of vacation spots, of meaningful trips. Take a few deep breaths and thank God for the beauty of outdoors you have experienced in your life. Give thanks for the encouragement you find in nature. Enjoy.



Daily Devotions

Week Two, Day Three

Read Exodus 5



"Then Moses turned again to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me?'" (Exodus 5:22)

Reflection

Have you ever felt like Moses felt in this chapter of Exodus? Have you ever found yourself in a conversation with God, asking why you ever felt led to a particular place or people that would not listen? Throughout our lives, it is so easy to think some of our work, our efforts have gone unappreciated and to question why we even tried.

Write the name of a place where you have served that feels to you in some ways like a failure. Maybe, like the story of Moses, it isn't the entire narrative of your history at a place but there was at least a time or season when you struggled with where you landed, where your journey took you.

Write five things that disappointed you in the place you consider a failure and write five things that you consider valuable to your spiritual journey that occurred in that time.



A place or season when I struggled:

The Disappointments of that particular Journey

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Valuable Lessons from that Journey

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Week Two, Day Three

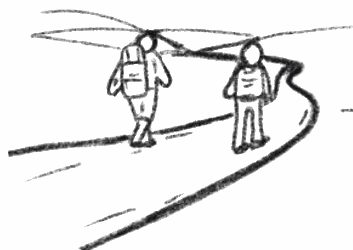


Prayer

God, in reflection upon my life I see there are places and people where I was not received, places where you were not received. I pray for courage and strength in moving forward with the understanding that not all calls lead to success. Give me perseverance to stay in the places where I recognize your call and to trust you no matter how I measure the success of that journey. Amen

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Inside: Locate a window in your house. Open the curtains, if you are able, and see what you are able to see. Place your hand upon the window and give thanks for the light shining through or the darkness coming through, for being able to see what is outside from the comfort of inside. Think about the quality of perspective and that sometimes we see and understand better when we have moved beyond a particular place.



Daily Devotions

Week Two, Day Four

Read Exodus 6:1-9

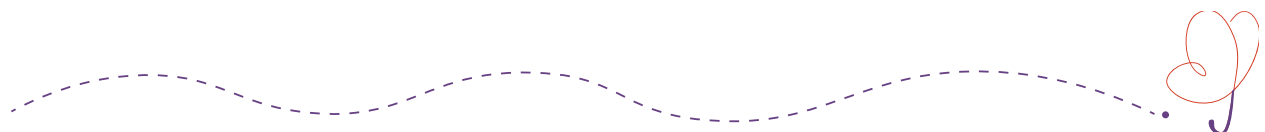


"Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery." (Exodus 6:9)

Reflection

This verse reminds us that not everyone can hear good news. It is a reminder that years or generations of oppression and violence don't just cause pain at the time of the trauma, but also cast shadows on how we have or don't have hope. It elicits compassion for those who have broken spirits and have been the victims of cruel slavery.

Write a prayer for those who suffer in this way. Write a prayer for those who are unable to hear good news because of broken spirits or a history of cruelty.



A Prayer for those Who Suffer



Week Two, Day Four

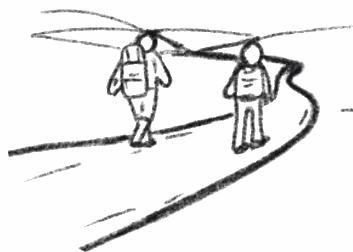


Prayer

God, I acknowledge this day that there are those who are not able to hear news of freedom or joy because of their histories. Grant me patience and understanding for those who cannot find reason to hope because of the oppression or cruelty they have experienced. Help me also to be patient with myself when I find myself hesitant in hope for myself because of my past experiences. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Outside: Go outside and stand at a window or door. Place your hand upon the window. Give thanks for openings, ways to connect what is inside with what is outside. Consider how you are an opening for the Divine Light to come into the lives of others.



Daily Devotions

Week Two, Day Five

Read Exodus 7:1-7



"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 7:3).

Reflection

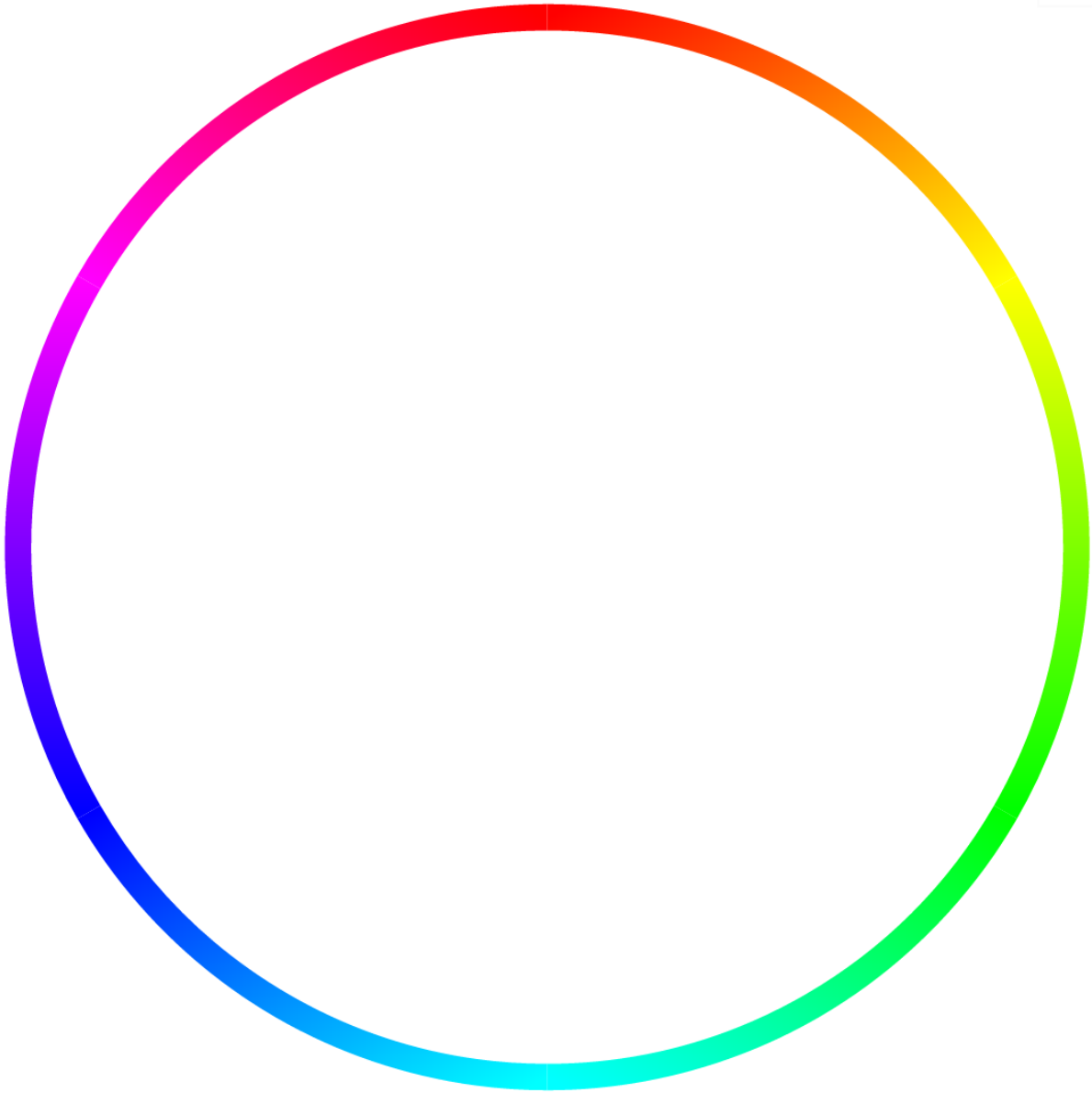
God is a mystery. If we think we understand God's ways, then we are only fooling ourselves. So many questions come with this part of the Exodus story. *Did Pharaoh even have a chance to make good choices if his heart was hardened by God? Why did God have Moses and Aaron ask the Pharaoh to let them go, if God already knew what the answer was going to be?* So many things we do not understand about God's decisions in this story, hardening the heart of the one with power is surely something to be pondered.

What does it mean to you to have a hardened heart? In the mandala on the following page, write the things you felt when your heart was hardened. (ex: angry, closed-minded, wanting vengeance, etc.) Where was God for you in the midst of having a hardened heart?



The Emotions of a Hardened Heart

Result



Week Two, Day Five

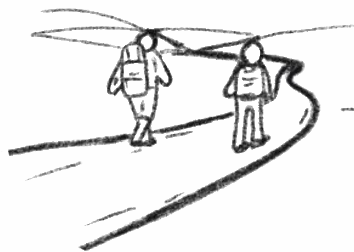


Prayer

God, I know what it is to have a hard heart. There are times in my life when it just happens. Maybe I was already broken or tired or beaten down and my heart just closed in response. Still, you were with me. You are with me. Today I pray for those whose hearts are hardened. I know it feels terrible to be that closed off to the sources of love. I pray for those who find themselves unable to offer grace to others. Amen

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Inside: Walk throughout your home. Consider the openings, the doorways and windows. Walk through the doorways and as you enter into each room, stop at the entryways and consider the things or people, the spiritual practices that help keep your heart open. What are the doors and windows that help you pass from space to space in your spiritual life?



Daily Devotions

Week Two, Day Six

Read Exodus 7:17-10:6



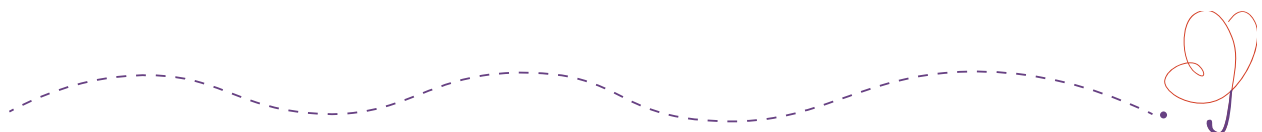
"Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.'" (Exodus 9:27)

Reflection

This comment from Pharaoh comes after the thunder and hail, the seventh plague. It seems he's had enough; but we know he doesn't mean what he says. Sometimes we are like Pharaoh, we confess, we humble ourselves, we say we are wrong and ask for leniency but then...well, you know human nature.

The ten plagues include bad water, frogs, gnats, flies, disease, boils, bad weather, locusts, darkness and death to all first born. Have you ever felt like you were under the curse of a plague? Has there been a time in your life when you felt you just couldn't escape trouble?

Draw a symbol of something in your life that felt like a curse from God.



This Happened and I Was Sure God **was** Punishing or Cursing Me



Week Two, Day Six

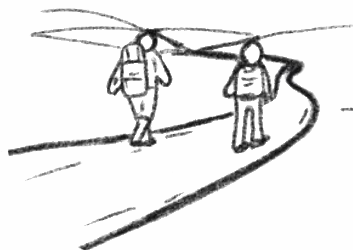


Prayer

God, today I am mindful of coming through some pretty awful things. I am mindful of times when I thought you were only condemning me, layering trouble after trouble upon me. Thank you for bringing me through the "plagues" in my life. Thank you for walking with me in the times of trouble. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Outside: Find a tree. Walk to it. Walk around it. Place your hands upon it. Listen to it. Pay attention to it, to the season it is in. Consider what kinds of storms and difficulties this tree has endured. Close your eyes and think about the tree from its very beginnings. Think of its roots and branches, its fruits or leaves. Consider how this tree has thrived and then give thanks for the way the tree speaks to you of strength and perseverance.



Daily Devotions

Week Two, Day Seven

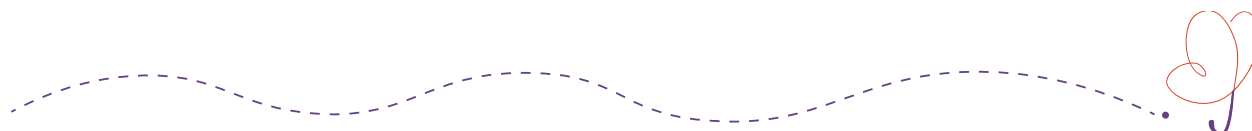
Read Exodus 12:1-14



"This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance." (Exodus 12:14)

Reflection

Passover is celebrated every year among Jewish families and communities. It is a commemoration of God's protection for them. Do you have a religious event that you celebrate that is important to you? Christmas? Easter? All Saints Day? Or maybe there is a family event that is celebrated. Draw or find and paste a symbol of an event you honor or celebrating God's protection over or presence with you.



A Symbol of a Celebration of God's Presence



Week Two, Day Six



Prayer

Thank you, *God* for reminders of your presence in my life, for holy days when we commemorate your presence with us, your protection over me and those I love. Thank you for reminders of your ever-present love in my life. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Rest: Find a comfortable place to rest. Lean back and consider the goodness in your life today. Take five deep breaths and let the love of *God* fill you completely.



Daily Devotions

Week Three, Day One

Read Exodus 13:1-10



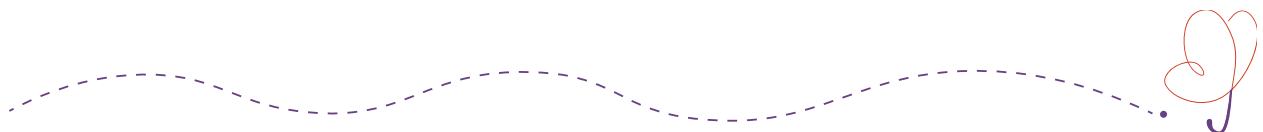
"Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.'" (Exodus 13:3a)

Reflection

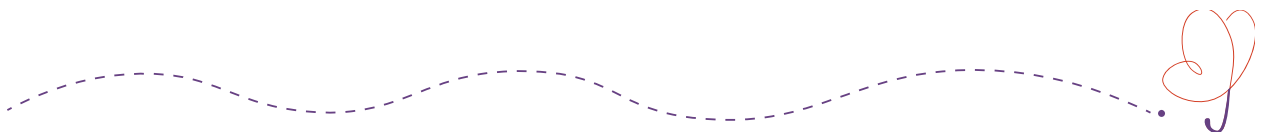
"Free at last," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed. "Free at last." There have been occasions in our lives when we felt held back or held down, oppressed, chained to something, chained to a place or relationship.

"I may not be where I want to be; but I'm certainly further along than I used to be," is a saying from southern churches. Today, you are invited to remember some of the places or times in your life when you felt burdened, chained, locked in and now you recognize that you are no longer there.

Write a prayer of thanksgiving for getting out of the situation or place or relationship that oppressed you. Give gratitude to God and for those who helped deliver you.



A Prayer of Thanksgiving For Freedom



Week Three, Day One

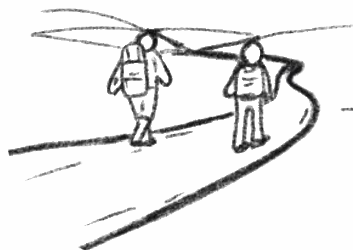


Prayer

God, I remember what it was to feel in bondage. I remember the days of feeling held down, oppressed, unable to be my truly authentic self. Thank you for the deliverance I have known in my life and may my heart always sing in praise. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

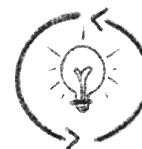
Sitting Inside: Sit down and take a few deep breaths. Now, with your right hand, grip your left wrist and with your left hand, grip your right wrist. Hold tight for ten seconds and then let go, hold your hands open and out in front of you. Consider how it feels to be free.



Daily Devotions

Week Three, Day Two

Read Exodus 13:17-18



"So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea." (Exodus 13:18)

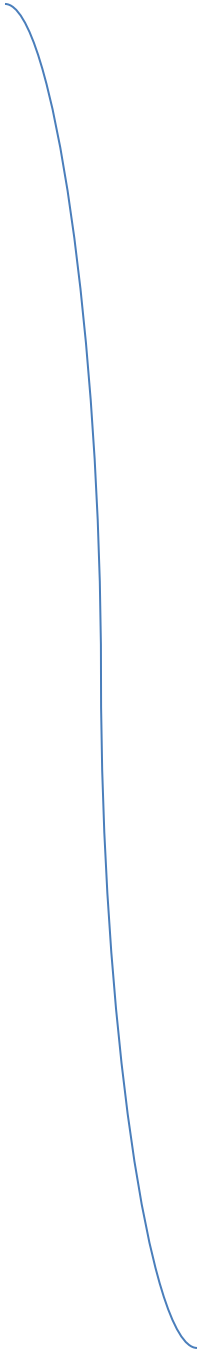
Reflection

Have you ever felt like you went a very indirect way to something that had a shorter path to it? Have you ever felt "round-abouted"? Sometimes it seems like we have to go the long way around to get to where we need to be. Perhaps we can see that path as not just a waste of time but perhaps protecting us from something we might not be prepared to encounter. Perhaps God is sparing us from the enemy even though it seems like a waste of time and we never really know what was waiting for us on the more direct path.

Consider something in your life that took a long time to happen. Maybe it was the completion of your education or the job you were hoping for a long time. Maybe it's the relationship you finally entered. Draw a path from the beginning of your hopes for this "promised land" and the final destination. Along the path write the events that occurred that helped you finally land where you are.



The Path to a Promised Land



Week Three, Day Two

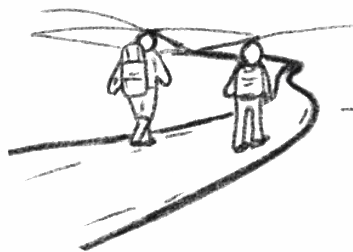


Prayer

God of "the long way", I know I am not always patient when I feel like things are taking too long. Help me to recognize that there may be reasons for things not happening on my time table. Help me to recognize that sometimes there must be a wilderness, not to punish me or even teach me a lesson, but to save me from what might happen on a different path. Thank you for your guidance on all the paths and journeys in my life. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Outside: Go outside and sit in your car's passenger side (or on the passenger side of someone's car). Consider what it is not to drive but rather to be driven. Look around you and see how things look from that side of the car as you sit in your driveway or a parking lot. Be mindful that God has the wheel in your life.



Daily Devotions

Week Three, Day Three

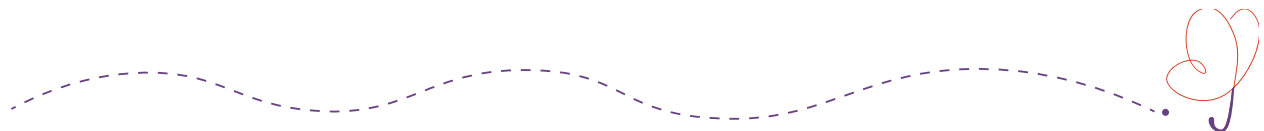
Read Exodus 17:20-22



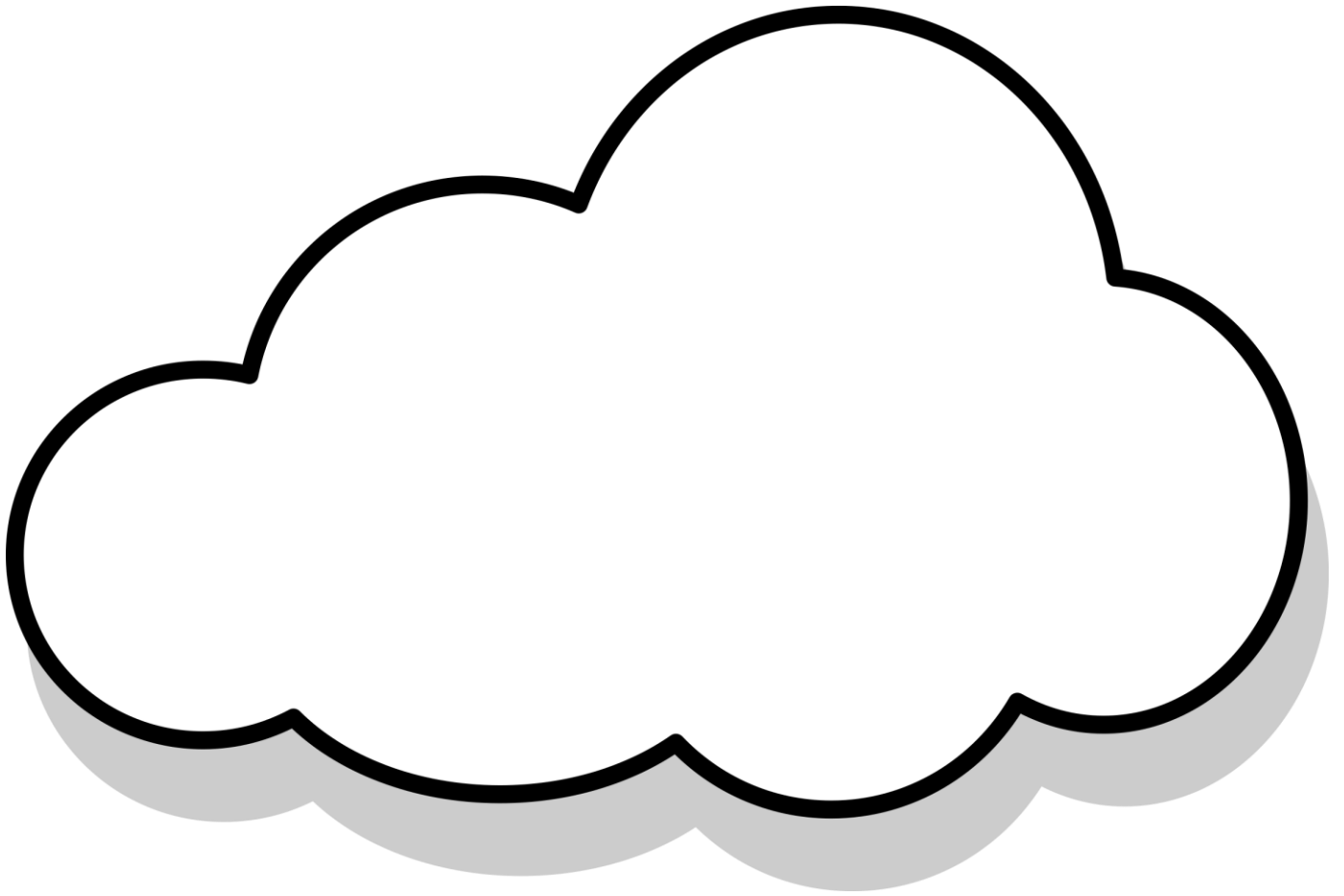
"Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." (Exodus 17:22)

Reflection

God as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. God as always present in the lives of the Israelites. Have you felt that presence of God with you in real ways? On the next page inside the cloud, write some of the ways you experience the presence of God.



The Presence of God



Week Three, Day Three



Prayer

Pillar of cloud and fire, thank you for staying in front of me, for walking beside me, for watching behind me. Thank you for always being present even when I wasn't aware you were there. Thank you for being a God of presence. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Inside: Stand in front of a wall. Close your eyes and put out your hands to feel the wall right in front of you. Imagine it not as a wall but as a pillar of God's presence. Feel your toes and your nose or forehead against it. Feel the real presence of the wall in front of you and consider that God is just as close.



Daily Devotions

Week Three, Day Four

Read Exodus 14:5-14



"Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still." (Exodus 14:13-14).

Reflection

How good are you at keeping still? How patient are you for God to accomplish God's will in your life? Do you find it difficult to wait on God when it seems like the enemy is bearing down? Practice the meditation below.

Take five deep breaths, long inhales, long exhales.

Repeat this verse, "Be still and know that I am God," three times.

Take three deep breaths.

Repeat this portion of the verse, "Be still and know that I am," three times.

Take three deep breaths.

Repeat this portion of the verse, "Be still and know," three times.

Take three deep breaths.

Repeat this portion of the verse, "Be still," three times.

Take three deep breaths.

Repeat this portion of the verse, "Be," three times.

Take three deep breaths.



Week Three, Day Four

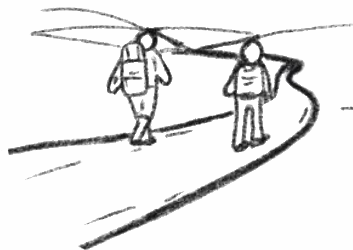


Prayer

Today, I will keep still and wait upon you, O Lord. I will cease the chatter and the worry and the push and pull of trying to make things work as I want them to work and I will just wait upon you. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Outside: Go to a place where you can feel sunshine on your face and body. Stand still. Close your eyes. Hold out your hands and feel yourself surrendering your journey's agenda to God.



Daily Devotions

Week Three, Day Five

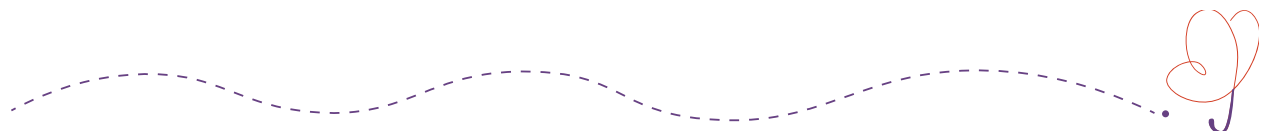
Read Exodus 14:21-31



"But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left." (Exodus 14:29)

Reflection

A miracle in the Red Sea. To find dry land while your enemy drowned beside you. Have you ever experienced a miracle? Cut and paste pictures or words from a journal/magazine/newspaper that symbolize a miracle.



A Miracle



Week Three, Day Five

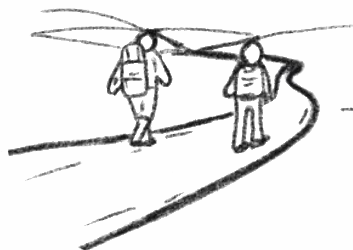


Prayer

God of miracles, of walking me through the seas of trouble in my life, thank you. Thank you for saving me from the enemies that almost took me down. Thank you for providing me with dry land to keep going. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Inside: Walk to a sink and let the water run across your hands. Close your eyes and feel the water pouring or dripping across your fingers. Open your eyes. Turn the water off and watch as the water begins to dry from your hands. Now, dry your hands with a towel and consider the change you have physically experienced from being covered by water to being dry.



Daily Devotions

Week Three, Day Six

Read Exodus 15:1-21



"And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the Lord, for God has triumphed gloriously.'
(Exodus 15:21a)

Reflection

The first part of Exodus 15 are two songs of praise from Moses and Miriam celebrating the Lord's deliverance of the people.

Below, using the letters of the alphabet, write a song of praise to God for God's deliverance and grace in your life. Each line will begin with a word that begins with the letter of the alphabet.

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

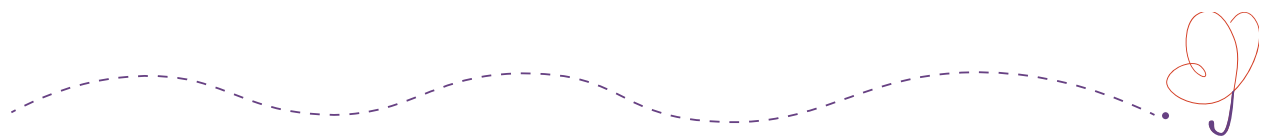
V

W

X

y

z



Week Three, Day Six

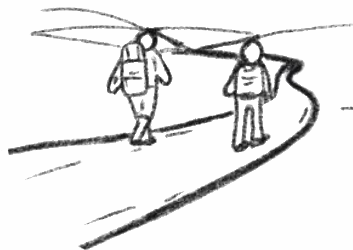


Prayer

Recite your prayer as the prayer for the day.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walk Outside: Go outside and take your prayer with you. Read a line and take a step. Read the next line and take another step. Let this prayer be a walking prayer.



Daily Devotions

Week Three, Day Seven

Read Exodus 15:22-27



"He cried out to the Lord; and the Lord showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet." (Exodus 15:25a)

Reflection

How much do you value the gift of clean drinking water? In your reflection today, take a glass of water and drink it slowly. Take a few sips and put down the glass to consider what it means to have healthy, clean water at your fingertips. In this reflection, feel the water in your mouth, as you swallow it. Give God thanks that you have water to drink. Take a few more sips. Be mindful of others who do not have access to clean water. Ask God to show you how to create a world where there is clean water for everyone.



Week Three, Day Seven



Prayer

Just like the Israelites knew the power of clean, sweet water, I thank you for this gift of clean water. I thank you that I live in a place where I can trust that the water I drink is not harmful; and I pray for those, so many, who live in a place where the water is not plenty or safe. Guide me to bring your realm of clean water to this place and time. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Rest: In your shower or bath today, close your eyes and enjoy the water as it pours across your body. Think of it as a baptism into the new day. Give thanks for your access to water and find ways to pledge to conserve water in one real way this week.



Daily Devotions

Week Four, Day One

Read Exodus 16:1-3



"For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Exodus 16:3b)

Reflection

And so it is. The complaints begin for the Children of Israel. And they continue all the way to the Promised Land.

Rev. Alyce McKenzie writes in *Word and Witness (Vol. 96:5)*, about a trip she made in England, a two week tour. She writes, "After a day or so, (I) began to pity the tour guide from the bottom of my heart because he had to listen patiently to all the complaints of all the members of the tour. I began to keep a running count of the things people complained about. The water was too warm at dinner, where were the ice cubes? The soup was too cold. The seats on the bus were too hard. The beds were too soft. I was trapped with a bunch of whiners whose refrain was, 'Why did we come all the way here to sleep in uncomfortable beds, share the bathrooms, and eat overcooked vegetables? We wish we had stayed at home.'"

Rev. McKenzie continues to say that she is not generally someone who complains, but after hearing this nonstop listing of complaints from the others, she finally lodged her own with the tour guide, "Isn't there some way your tour company can do a pre-screening and weed out the complainers? How can I possibly enjoy anything about this tour? Do you think I came all the way here to listen to these whiners?"

Have you ever been with a person who constantly complained? Are you one who can never seem to be happy with your circumstances? Think about what helps you when you feel the urge to complain or whine? Try to spend this day without airing one complaint.

Week Four, Day One

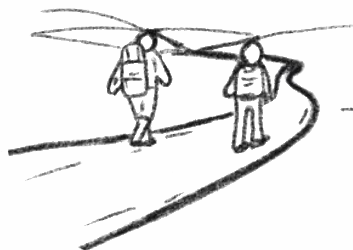


Prayer

O God, I read this story about whining and complaining and I confess I recognize myself in the behavior of the Children of Israel. Forgive me when I cannot find anything positive to say. Forgive me when I can only see what is not working. In this day, guide me towards a day without complaints. Amen

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Inside: Find a place to sit that isn't your favorite chair. Settle in. Notice what feelings are coming up for you. Notice your discomfort. Don't judge yourself, just pay attention to the reasons you don't like this seat. Let yourself feel what you feel, think what you think about this chair. And then, let the thoughts and feelings float away. Now, try to find one thing that is worthwhile and good about where you are sitting.



Daily Devotions

Week Four, Day Two

Read Exodus 16:4-8



"I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day." (Exodus 16:4a)

Reflection

Manna for the day. Not for tomorrow. Not for the week. Just for today. Daily bread. This concept is difficult for most westerners. We are a society of hoarders, a people who need more than just what is useful for the day. We question, *what will happen if I don't get any for tomorrow? What if I can't go gather what I need tomorrow? Why shouldn't I take a little more?*

Today, practice mindfulness about "daily bread." Write a list of what you really need in this day.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Week Four, Day Two

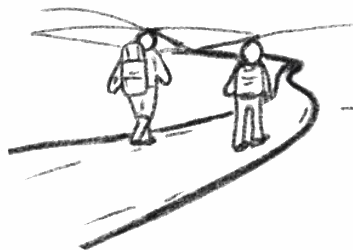


Prayer

God, I know I take more than what I need. I pray, "give us this day our daily bread," but I confess that's usually not enough for me. Show me how I can practice conservation, how I can let go of my worry about tomorrow. Help me to trust that what I have today is all that I need and you will supply my needs for tomorrow. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Outside: Find a place to sit outside. Jesus reminds us to take notice of the lilies in the field, how they neither toil nor spin, and the birds of the air, that neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. Take a few minutes to observe the plant life and any animals around you. Just watch. Let them teach you about "daily bread."



Daily Devotions

Week Four, Day Three

Read Exodus 17:1-7



"Moses cried out to the Lord, 'What shall I do with this people?'" (Exodus 17:4a)

Reflection

Have you ever felt frustrated with the people around you? Have you ever felt like you weren't going to be able to stand another word from them, another complaint, another bad joke or piece of gossip? In our scripture reading today, we see Moses getting tired of the Children of Israel. We hear his own complaint lodged to God about their incessant whining. Sometimes the classroom for our spiritual lives, is having to be in the presence of unhappy people. Write a list below of the pet peeves you have about what others do or say. Take a few minutes and jot down what "gets your goat." Then ask God to help you when you come face to face with this behavior. Ask for grace in your dealings with these pet peeves.

Ughhhh!! These Things Bug Me!!!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Week Four, Day Three

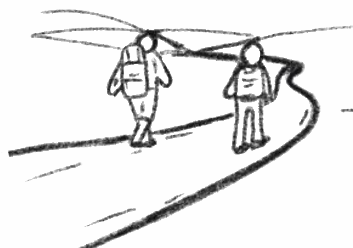


Prayer

God, I know I complain at times. I know I'm not always cheerful and easy to be around. Forgive me when I judge harshly the ways of others. Help me to take a breath before responding when I am face to face with complaints or disagreeable people. Help me to find ways to provide them with living water from you. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Inside: Stand in front of something you have complained about. Maybe it's someone's clutter. Maybe it's your clutter. Maybe it's an item of clothing in your closet, a particular piece of art or furniture. Stand in front of it and try to see it differently. Find something about it about which to be grateful. Try to gain a new perspective about something about which you complain. Or make the decision to change or remove it.



Daily Devotions

Week Four, Day Four

Read Exodus 17:8-16



"But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the sun set." (Exodus 17:12)

Reflection

Even Moses got tired. Even the great prophet and deliverer of the Children of Israel needed a little help from time to time. How are you at asking for help? How easy is it for you to let someone hold you up? Today, consider the people in your life who have held you up. Write their names down below and then pick one of them and write them a thank you note, sharing your gratitude for the time they lifted you up and steadied you.

Aarons and Hurs Who Hold Me Up

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Week Four, Day Four

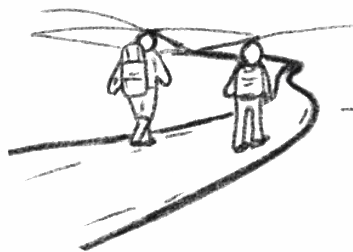


Prayer

God, this world is a weary place and I cannot make it on this journey without the hands of those who steady me. Thank you for bringing people into my life who lift me up, who make a place for me, who empower me to deal with struggles. I am grateful for these sisters and brothers in my life. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Outside: Find a place you can stand. Hold out your arms to your sides. Hold them for as long as you can. Close your eyes and think about how it is to need the assistance of others. When you become uncomfortable, drop your arms and let yourself be mindful of the help and encouragement you have received from others.



Daily Devotions

Week Four, Day Five

Read Exodus 18:13-27



"You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you, you cannot do it alone." (Exodus 18:18)

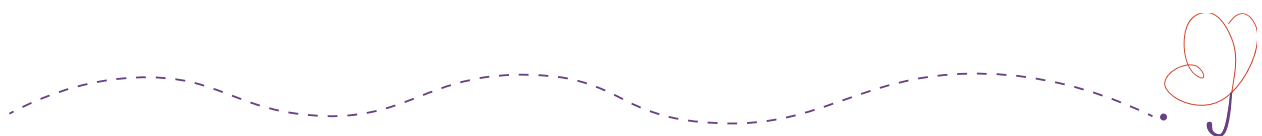
Reflection

You ever bite off more than you can chew? You ever try to do it all? Take on too much? Refuse to ask for assistance?

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, recognizes a train wreck before it arrives. He understands Moses is trying to do it all and he gives him some good advice. "Get some help!"

Perhaps because this comes after needing Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms, Moses is able to receive the counsel from Jethro. Or maybe he's just worn out and knows truth when he hears it.

Sometimes we get good advice, solid wisdom that shapes us. Write down a couple of things you have been told that came to you at just the right time. Write down some of the pieces of advice that have helped you on your journey.



Words That Shaped Me



Week Four, Day Five

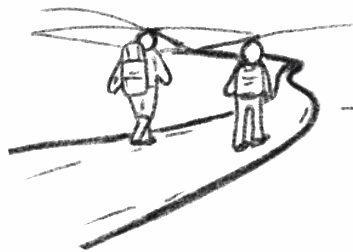


Prayer

God, thank you for those folks in my life who have been to me like Jethro was to Moses. Thank you for people who give me wise counsel that continues to help me on my spiritual path. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walk Inside: Walk to where you keep your books. Pick out one that has been helpful to you. Maybe it's a self-help book, maybe it's the Bible. Pull it out and find a line or two that has been helpful, read a few words, take a few steps, read a few more words, and take a few more steps. Let this be a walking meditation, using the wise counsel from a book you value.



Daily Devotions

Week Four, Day Six

Read Exodus 19:16-25



"On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled." (Exodus 19:16)

Reflection

Have you ever felt afraid of *God*? Have you ever experienced something frightful and thought it was *God's* presence meant to scare you? Storms often frighten people, loud cracks of thunder, great peals of lightning can make any of us jump in fear; and for many people they consider this as evidence of *God's* anger.

Draw a picture of something that has frightened you in the past or still frightens you today. Consider how you think of *God* in this scenario. Is *God* present? Is *God* the creator of this fearful situation? As you create this picture, make sure to include how you see *God* in this event.



This Scares Me



Week Four, Day Six



Prayer

God, I often think you are absent in frightful situations. I have often struggled with theology that you are angry with me and causing great fear in my heart. Help me to find your love when I am frightened. Enable me to recognize your grace even when my heart pounds in fear and anxiety. Amen

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Outside: Find a new place to walk, an unfamiliar place. Notice how you feel walking here. Do you feel afraid? Are you more vigilant? Take a few steps and stop. Place your hand on your heart and take deep breaths. Think of yourself in safety. Imagine arms of protection around you as you walk a new path.



Daily Devotions

Week Four, Day Seven

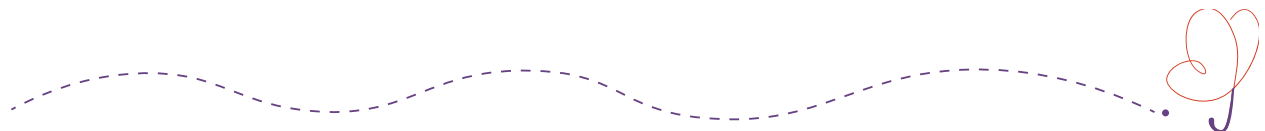
Read Exodus 20:1-7



"You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3)

Reflection

We worship a lot of gods if we're honest. We find ourselves bowing down to lots of other beings than God. We sometimes lose ourselves in the race to be successful or rich or well-liked. Find a magazine or newspaper and cut out pictures of gods you sometimes trip over, things of this world to which you sometimes bow down. Place them below.



Week Four, Day Seven

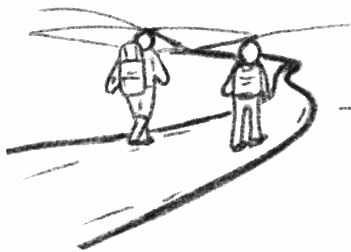


Prayer

God, I sometimes try to find my joy in places other than in you. I often seek approval from places and people that don't matter. I often give power to the things that are not you. Help me to remember that you are the one true God and help me to seek you only. Amen

Pilgrimage Posture

Rest: Find a comfortable place outside and just rest. Think of yourself as being in God's arms and lie back and relax.



Daily Devotions

Week Five, Day One

Read Exodus 20:8-11



"Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy." (Exodus 20:8)

Reflection

Most people understand the concept of and the need for Sabbath. God modeled this day of rest for us in the Creation story and then made sure that Moses told the people that honoring the Sabbath was important to their spiritual lives. There was to be no work, not by the believer, not by anyone in their family, not by the livestock, not even by the foreigner who may be working or residing in the believer's towns. Sabbath is not just the commandment we obey for ourselves, the gift we give ourselves; it is also the gift we provide for others in our lives.

How are you at abiding in Sabbath? Do you have rituals or an event that is a tradition to your Sabbath celebration? Perhaps you can add a way to mark the beginning and the end of the Sabbath with a lighting of a candle or pouring water into a bowl, a visual representation of honoring this day of rest.

For your next Sabbath, try to be intentional about the things you do. Write a few ways to honor your Sabbath. Consider making "**sharing**" a part of this day either by hosting a meal, calling a friend or relative to encourage them, or simply holding others in your prayers. Mark the beginning of the Sabbath and mark the end. Find scriptures that you would like to meditate on during this day of rest. Write down a few verses that will help you observe and enjoy Sabbath.



Ways to Honor Sabbath

Verses that encourage me as I Honor Sabbath



Week Five, Day One

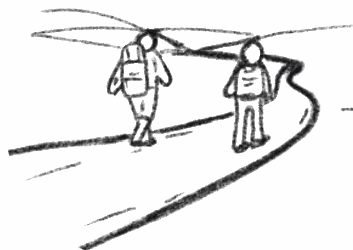


Prayer

God, you have commanded your people to rest, to honor what is good in creation, to set aside the duties and activities that fill up the rest of the week and to focus on our spiritual lives. As I make plans for this Sabbath, help me to be mindful that this is a requirement for the relationship I seek to have with you. Help me to find meaningful ways this week to rest. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

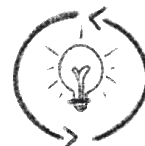
Sitting Inside: Find a seat of rest and comfort. Sit back, lean your head and neck upon the back of the seat. Let yourself relax and contemplate on where you will sit on your Sabbath. What place do you look forward to that will hold you when you rest?



Daily Devotions

Week Five, Day Two

Read Exodus 20:12-17



"You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13)

Reflection

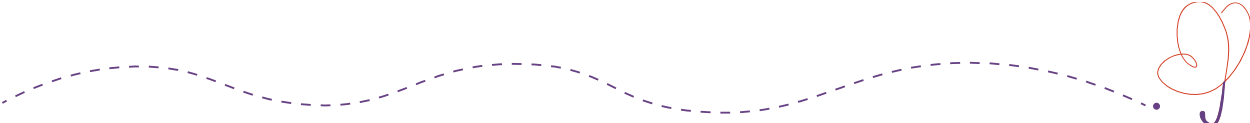
It has been said that the first four commandments speak to one's relationship to God and the last six speak to our relationships with others; and that you can't obey one group without obeying the second. Honor your parents, do not murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness against a neighbor, covet your neighbor's belongings. These commandments keep us in right relationship with each other, give us a moral code of what is expected in community, society, and global life.

Most of us have not committed murder, not in the literal sense. But today I want you to consider how we might participate in murderous ways, particularly when it comes to killing the dream of another, destroying a new idea because we don't like it, putting an end to a process or relationship because we don't approve. If we broaden the idea of "murder," I'm afraid we all might find we "kill" a little more often than we think.

Reflect upon a dream in your life that never came to fruition. What happened to it? Did someone kill it? Did you just let it die? Maybe it wasn't a dream that was meant to come to life or maybe it was deferred? Remember and write about a dream you once had and how it died.



I used to dream about this



Week Five, Day Two

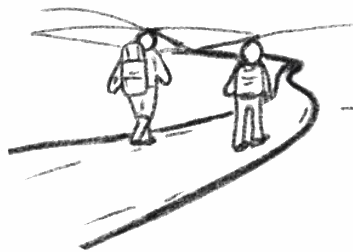


Prayer

It is not like I intend to do harm to the dreams of others, especially the children in my life. It is never my intention, O God, to discourage the creative and spiritual sparks in others. Forgive me when I have killed what someone else has loved or become passionate about. Help me to recognize the gift of encouragement and celebration and honor and care when hearing about or dealing with the dreams of others. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Outside: Take a towel or blanket and find a comfortable place to sit outside on the ground, if you are able. Feel the solid ground beneath you. Close your eyes and stretch your face toward the sun. And press the full weight of your body against the ground. Consider the foundation of the world, consider how you are being held by God and by the earth. Give thanks for what is solid and dependable in your life.



Daily Devotions

Week Five, Day Three

Read Exodus 23:20-22



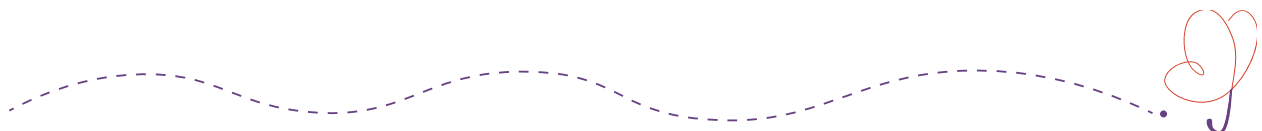
"I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared." (Exodus 23:20)

Reflection

Do you believe in angels? Have you ever had the experience of being in the company of an angel? In the Exodus story as the Children of Israel are being sent into the land of enemies, God promises to go ahead of them, to send a divine messenger to assist them on their journey to the Promised Land.

What a gift to think of the ones who have gone before us and helped create a path for us to follow. What a gift to remember that we follow in the footsteps of great people, of saints and pioneers who made the way for us.

Today in your reflection, think about one person whose life helped shape yours. Consider a saint who walked before you and showed you the way. Write something about this angel who went before you. It may be someone you know or it might be someone you consider a hero of the faith. Write down some of the things this angel/saint/hero taught you.



Gifts of the Angel

Who is an angel in your life?

What did they teach you?

How did they influence your journey?



Week Five, Day Three

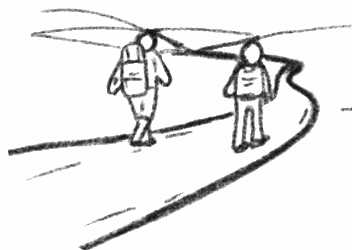


Prayer

God, I could have never made my way without the ones who went before me. Thank you for the angels and saints who paved the way for me, who demonstrated what is possible, who showed me what I can do in my life. Thank you for those who have gone before me and given me hope. Amen

Pilgrimage Posture

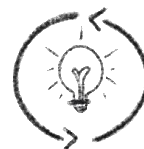
Standing Inside: Facing east, stand with your hands on your hips. Steady yourself, bend your knees slightly, keep your chin high, your shoulders back. Feel yourself standing strong. Consider this posture of strength as you stand in the direction of the rising sun. Close your eyes and think of yourself standing in the footprints of others who made a way for you to go. Think of yourself now standing in this way of strength for others who will follow.



Daily Devotions

Week Five, Day Four

Read Exodus 25:1-22



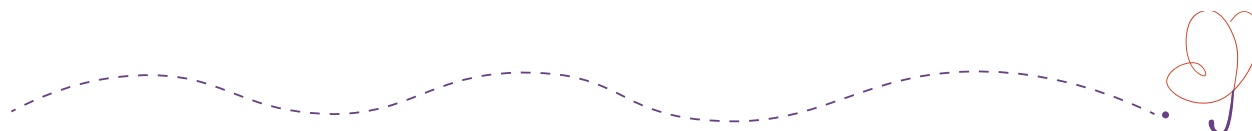
"Then you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two cubits and a half shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width." (Exodus 25:17)

Reflection

The mercy seat was the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. It covered the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the sacred vessels and the holy bread. Mercy was a seat and a covering to bear witness of the Divine Presence that was with the Children of Israel in the wilderness and beyond.

What role does mercy play in your life? Have you ever been on the recipient end of mercy? Have you ever been given grace when you didn't deserve it? Do you know the sweet relief of forgiveness?

Write a definition of mercy. How do you understand what it is to receive and give mercy? Your own idea, your own metaphors, your own understanding of mercy, write it down.



This is Mercy



Week Five, Day Four

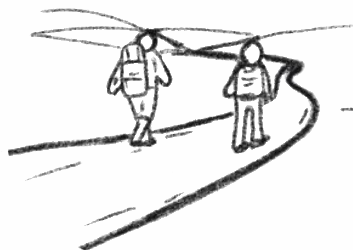


Prayer

I come to the mercy seat to sit with you, O God. I come to bathe in these waters of grace. I know I try to stay away from here. I try to pretend I don't need this kind of radical love and acceptance; but I know what you are and how you love. Let me rest upon this seat of your mercy and give you thanks. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Outside: Find a place to stand outside and get comfortable. Raise your hands above your head while saying, "God of mercy." Then place your hands on your heart and say, "Hear my prayers." Repeat this five times and then stand and pray from your heart.



Daily Devotions

Week Five, Day Five

Read Exodus 26:31-37



"You shall put the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant, in the most holy place."
(Exodus 26:34).

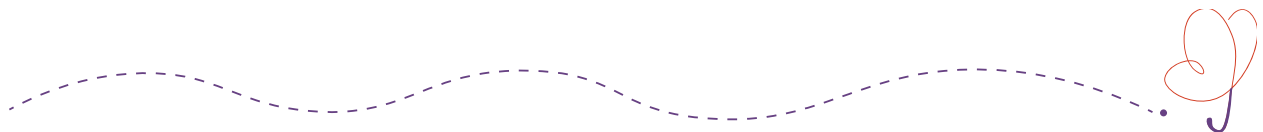
Reflection

What value do you hold in your "most holy place?" Is it love? Compassion? Peace? Joy? How do you even think of your "most holy place?"

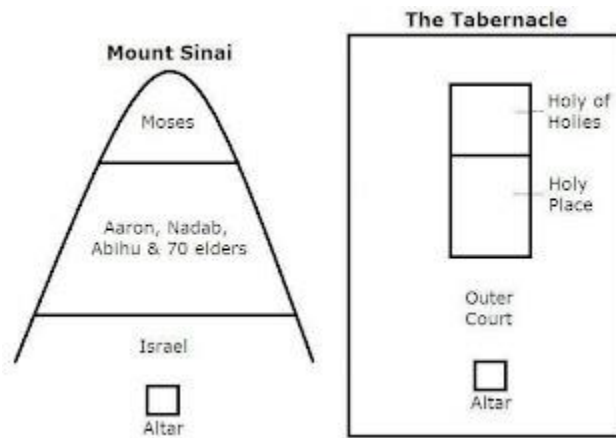
In Exodus chapters 25-31, we read about how to build a holy place. There are specific instructions given to Moses about curtains and altars and vestments. It is very detailed and every piece of this tabernacle is intentional and meaningful. Everything has its place. But MERCY is to be in the most holy place. It is as if God is saying, "*This is the very essence of Me.*"

Name the elements of the Tabernacle of your life within the square on the following page. Give measurements or colors, name what is important to you to describe the very essence of your life. What is in the most holy place? What do you value most in your life? What colors will you use and why?

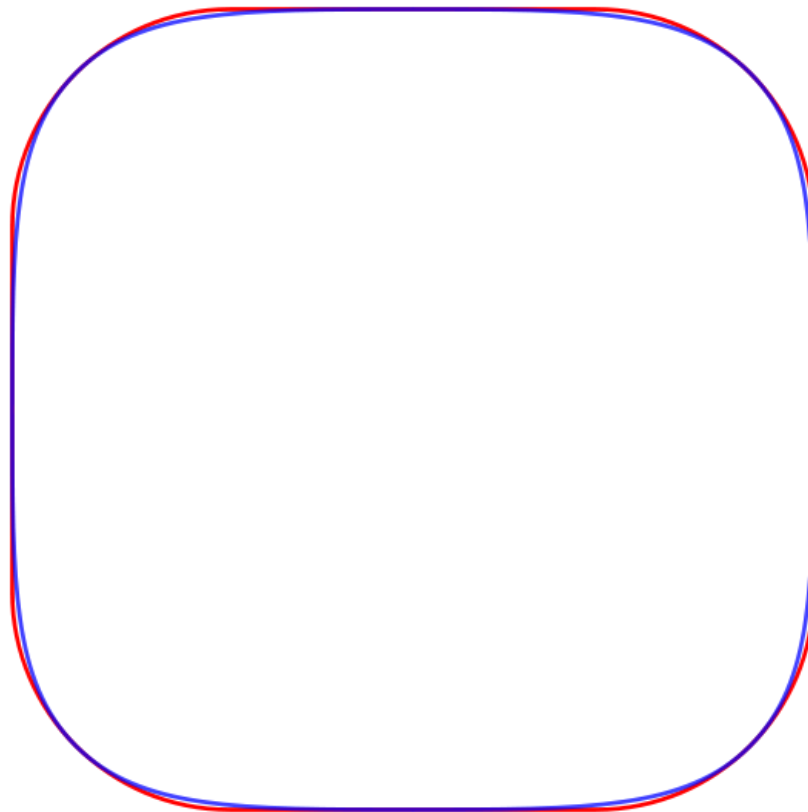
Take a few minutes and draw and write about who you are as a Tabernacle of the Divine Spirit.



Example of the Tabernacle as Recorded in Exodus



I am a Tabernacle of the Divine Spirit. Here are the values I wish to uphold:



Week Five, Day Five

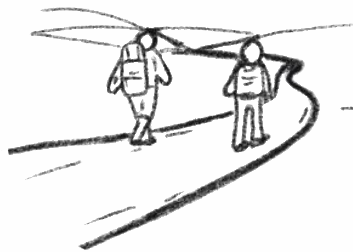


Prayer

God, I wish to be a Tabernacle of your Divine-ness in the world. I wish to have others look upon my life as a vessel of your Spirit. Help me to be mindful that if I value mercy, I need to uphold mercy in my being. If I value kindness, then I need to be kind. If I value compassion, then help me be compassionate. Thank you for the opportunity to decide what I want my life, my "Tabernacle" to be about and help me to continue building the life I want to lead. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Inside: Walk throughout your house, noticing each room and what it holds. What do you see represented in the things you have hanging on the walls or placed upon furniture? What values do you demonstrate in your collections and the prominence of certain items? What is the most important place in your house? Walk around each room and notice what your residence says about you.



Daily Devotions

Week Five, Day Six

Read Exodus 32:1-6



"Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (Exodus 32:1b)

Reflection

"*This man Moses??*" That sounds a lot like the people have completely forgotten their leader. They say this phrase like he's a stranger, someone they didn't really know or like. "*This guy, this man, this one who has abandoned us.*" They have completely lost their way and turned on their leader. And Aaron does what they ask and builds them a golden calf to worship.

Oh my, so this is how it goes. Step away for just a minute and everyone forgets their way. Step away, to talk to God, by the way, and everybody just forgets where you are and what you are about.

It's easy to judge the Children of Israel; but let's not be too harsh or quick with our judgment. We've done the same thing, right? We've gotten tired of waiting and just took matters into our own hands a few times in our lives, right? How are you at waiting? How patient are you, really?

For this reflection, using the sentences below, rate yourself on your ability to wait using the scale below. (Circle the one that describes you).

1. I don't mind if I get delayed when I am traveling.

Never Ever

Sometimes

Almost always

2. I can sit still without needing something to distract me.

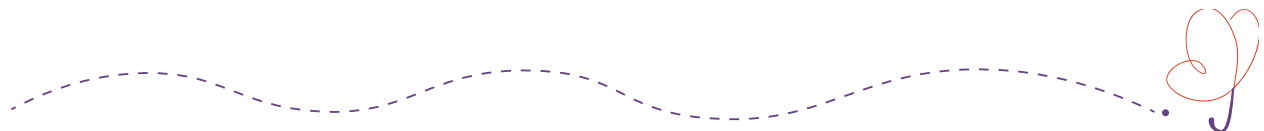
Never Ever

Sometimes

Almost always

3. I don't get upset if I happen to get in the slow lane in traffic.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always
4. I have been told that I need to calm down or chill out because I have been angry waiting on something or someone.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always
5. I really don't have a problem with waiting.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always
6. I never get mad when others hold me up or make me late.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always
7. I think waiting offers opportunities for growth and I like that.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always
8. If nothing is happening, I will sometimes push for something to happen.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always
9. I am told I am a patient person.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always
10. I don't get mad and quit waiting if it seems too long.
Never Ever Sometimes Almost always

So, how did you do? How do you rate yourself at waiting?



Week Five, Day Six

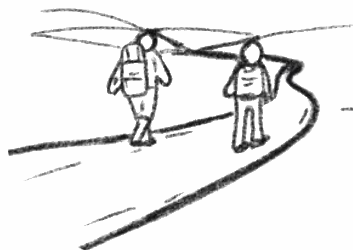


Prayer

Clearly God, I have a few issues when it comes to waiting. I know it's a scary thing to pray for patience; but I'm being courageous today and doing so. Help me to learn how to wait. Help me to be kind if someone makes me late. Help me to find ways to calm down and find peace when I am called upon to wait. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Outside: Start by walking slowly. Take a step and then bring your feet together. Wait and then take another step and then bring your feet together. Do this for about ten steps. Now walk slightly faster, step forward, another step forward. Now walk briskly, faster now. Then stop. Which style of walking feels most natural to you? Today, as you journey, try walking a wee bit slower. Take a few steps and stop. Look around. Think about what you miss when you walk fast.



Daily Devotions

Week Five, Day Seven

Read Exodus 32:9-20



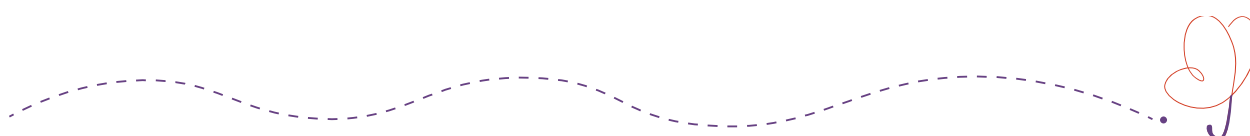
"And God changed God's mind about the disaster that God planned to bring on the people." (Exodus 32:14)

Reflection

Have you ever thought about God changing God's mind? What do you think made that happen in this part of the story? Was it Moses speaking on behalf of the people? Was it God just being God?

How well do you change your mind? Especially if you're angry and someone has done something that really makes you mad, are you able to change your mind and not react with vengeance or in anger?

Write a list of what helps you when you are mad to be able to let go of the anger. What are the steps you take to move away from the anger controlling you?



These are the Things that Help me Let Go of Anger

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



Week Five, Day Seven

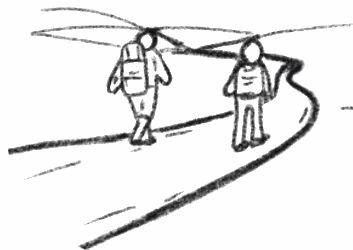


Prayer

God in heaven, if you can change your mind and not destroy your people, I can surely change mine and not act in ways that break or destroy relationships. Thank you for Moses and for his courage in speaking to you about the Israelites. Thank you for the people in my life who talk me off the ledge when I am angry. Help me to breathe deeply and be willing to show grace when I am angry or have been wronged. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Rest: This is your day for rest. See if you can find a swing or hammock to sit in today. Maybe a rocking chair, some seat with movement. Let the swaying bring your heart comfort. Close your eyes and enjoy the moving seat!



Daily Devotions

Week Six, Day One

Read Exodus 33:17-23



"And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Exodus 33:19b)

Reflection

This verse shows up again in the sacred texts, *God* reminding people that *God* will be gracious and show mercy in the way *God* chooses. And we have no say about that. *Grace* and *mercy* are *God's* gifts and *God* gives them in exactly the way *God* desires. "Rain on the just and the unjust," the scriptures tell us.

Have you ever been angry that someone else was shown mercy? Have you ever resented the successes of others, the good things that came into the life of someone other than yourself? Have you ever begrudged *God* for being merciful to those you didn't think deserved it?

Make a list of those you do not wish to be shown mercy. Don't worry, no one will read it. Just be honest and write down the names or the groups of people you think deserve punishment and not mercy.

Go ahead, tell the truth.



These Folks Don't Deserve Mercy



Week Six, Day One

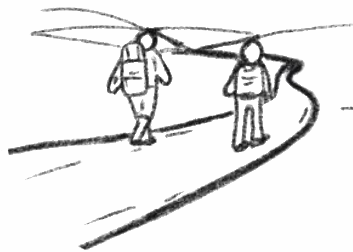


Prayer

God, it's true. There are a few folks and a few groups of people that have done some real harm in this world. So, I confess that I am not too thrilled that you offer them grace and mercy. Help me to turn this resentment over to you. Help me to understand that you are *God* and I am not. Help me to let go of my need for retribution. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Inside: Sit down and look at a newspaper or magazine. Notice the pictures. Read the headlines. Now with every photo you see, every story you read, end it by saying, "May God have mercy upon you."



Daily Devotions

Week Six, Day Two

Read Exodus 34:1-9



"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Exodus 34:6b)

Reflection

God tells Moses to cut two new tablets of stone like the former ones that were destroyed and that God is going to write all the words on them that had been written before.

Have you ever gotten a second chance? Have you ever given someone a second chance? What did it feel like?

Draw a symbol for a second chance. Choose a symbol that represents the relief that is felt when someone forgives you and lets you try again.



This is What a Second Chance Looks Like



Week Six, Day Two

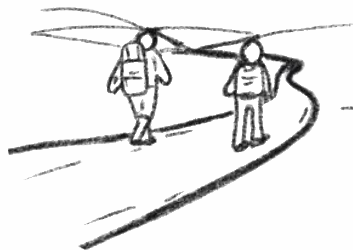


Prayer

Thank you, *God*, for your forgiveness when I have messed up, when I have acted in ways that are not of love, when I have not been my best self. Thank you for giving me extra chances. Help me when I am asked by another for this brand of mercy to be able to follow your example. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Outside: Find a comfortable place to sit outside when there is a little wind. Close your eyes. What do you hear? Are you able to hear wind in the trees? Are you able to feel a breeze on your face? As these events are happening, think of the breeze as being the Spirit blowing across and within you. Think of the wind in the trees as the Spirit clearing a way for you to begin again. Give thanks.



Daily Devotions

Week Six, Day Three

Read Exodus 34:27-35



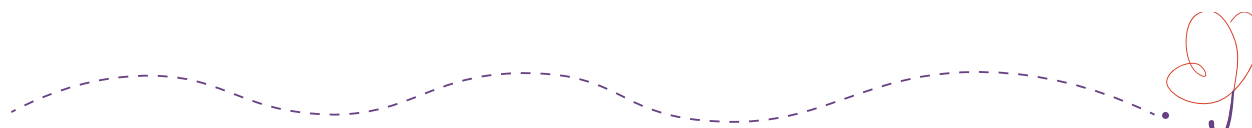
"Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." (Exodus 34:29b)

Reflection

Have you ever had that Moses glow? Have you ever felt like you were so much in the Spirit that you just felt your face redden and glow? Have you ever seen someone with that glow?

To be in the presence of God is to be changed. It is to be fully yourself and to be alive and glowing in ways that we don't always experience in everyday life.

Write about a time you felt like you were glowing. Maybe it was a religious experience. Maybe it was romantic love. Maybe it was being so very happy you just couldn't stop the grin from spreading across your face. Spend a few minutes and write about a time you glowed.



I Remember *Glowing* When



Week Six, Day Three



Prayer

I like the thought of glowing in your Spirit, God. I relish the thought of being so filled with your presence that it literally shows up on my face. Help me to be mindful of how I hold my face, how I look to others. Help me to look with love upon the faces of others. Help me to smile. Help me to open my heart to the Spirit which changes my face. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Inside: Stand in front of a mirror and look at your face. Try different emotions. Look angry. What happens to your face? What do you hold tightly when you are mad. Try the look of compassion. How does that look on you? Put on the look of kindness. Now, smile. Hold it for thirty seconds. Now just let your face relax to its resting state. Could you brighten it a little? Could you maybe smile a little more? Ponder how you look to others.



Daily Devotions

Week Six, Day Four

Read Exodus 35:4-29



"And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the Lord's offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments." (Exodus 35:21)

Reflection

"With hearts stirred and willing spirits." That's a miracle in itself, right? Have you ever seen a people come together for a common purpose? Have you ever been in a worship setting and everyone was moved to bring an offering, to come forward to offer themselves as living sacrifices? Have you ever witnessed an assembly of stirred hearts and willing spirits? My, O My, that is a beautiful thing.

Write moments in your history, in the history of this nation or world when you saw hearts stirred and spirits willing, when change was being made. Ponder the transformations we have made as a people when we are willing to be moved by the Spirit.



A History of Stirring Hearts



Week Six, Day Four

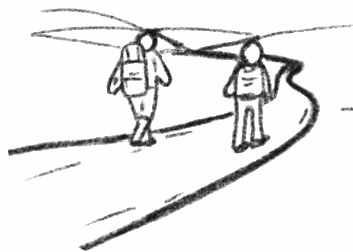


Prayer

Thank you, *God*, for the movement of your Spirit, for the way you turn hearts and change lives. Thank you for the moments of real sacrifice and offerings that I have seen in my lifetime. Help me to hold fast to these transformative events and know that they are still possible for us. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

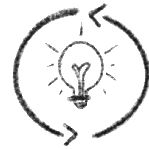
Standing Outside: Find a comfortable position and face west. This is the direction of the setting sun. As you stand facing what is the final light of each day, ask *God* to fill you with the willingness to share what you have with others, to be moved to share your sacrifice and offerings before the close of your life. Amen.



Daily Devotions

Week Six, Day Five

Read Exodus 36:2-7



"So the people were restrained from bringing; for what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work." (Exodus 36:6b-7)

Reflection

Restrained from bringing more?? Instructed that enough has been supplied, that there is more than enough already so quit bringing the gifts? Have you ever seen that happen in church or in places where the work of justice is being done?

It does happen. Sometimes a place or group will request a certain item and they'll be bombarded with those items and have to say that's enough. We don't need any more of that particular thing; but that's not typically commonplace. It seems there is always a need for more.

Make a list of places where you wished there would be a declaration made, a sign posted, that said, "We have enough. We have solved this problem. Don't worry about giving any more."

Where would you like to see people restrained from sharing because the work has been completed?



Here is Where I Wish There to Be Enough and No Longer Calling for More

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Week Six, Day Five

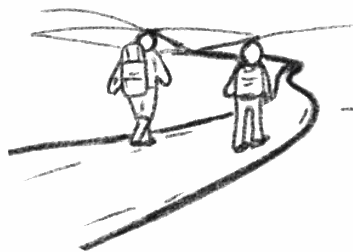


Prayer

Your realm on earth as it is in heaven, we were taught to pray; and I think how wonderful it would be if that were happening. If all the ills of our world were healed, all the trouble ended, all the problems solved and we could say, "Enough, we have enough." Help me, Lord, to work until that day comes, help me to continue to sacrifice and bring my offerings, looking forward to the day when I am told, it is enough. Everyone has enough. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Inside: Walk throughout your house and see what could be given away. Walk into closets. Open cabinets and drawers. Find a garbage bag or box and fill them with things that need to be given away. What do you have more than enough of and what can you let go of?



Daily Devotions

Week Six, Day Six

Read Exodus chapters 38 and 39



"When Moses saw that they had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded them, he blessed them." (Exodus 39:43)

Reflection

These two chapters contain a lot of details. There is a lot about color of material, type and measurements of wood, vestments, robes, stones; there are a lot of details in the creation of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting.

Are you detailed oriented? Do you like a neat place to work and live? How often do you clean? What is important to you about the place you live, the area you work, the place you worship?

There are categories below. Under each heading, write down everything you do and how often to keep that particular place or area neat and clean. If it isn't you who takes care of the details, then write down who it is that makes sure these details are covered.

Kitchen

Laundry

Floors

Car

Workspace

Bathrooms

Yard

Other (Garage, Recreational vehicles, storage areas, etc)



Week Six, Day Six

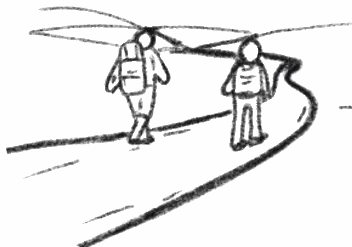


Prayer

God, I read these chapters and it seems like a lot of details about something that doesn't concern me. But perhaps there is a lesson in this part of the story of the journey of the Children of Israel. Perhaps there is a lesson about the need for order and paying attention to details of the spaces where we live and work and worship. Thank you for those who pay closest attention to what needs to be done. Thank you for the church custodians and those who care for the building. Make me mindful of the work required to maintain order and cleanliness and beauty. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Outside: Take a walk in your neighborhood. What has been neglected? Is there litter and trash? Are there abandoned houses or businesses? What can you do to make a difference in the place you live to bring beauty to the area?



Daily Devotions

Week Six, Day Seven

Read Exodus 40:34-38

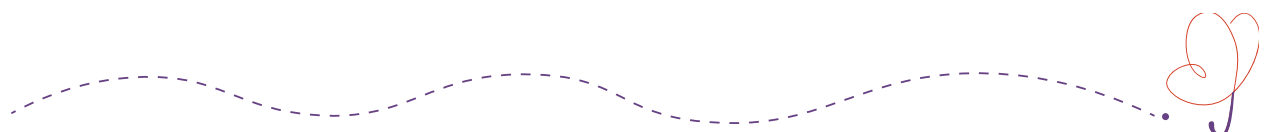


"For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey."
(Exodus 40:38)

Reflection

"Each stage of the journey," God was present and visible to the Israelites. This is a beautiful and powerful thing, to know God is present. Always.

In today's reflection, make a timeline of when you were aware of God's presence in your life. Write down the major events of your life from birth until now, major events of God's presence with you.



Timeline of birth through childhood/*God was here*



Timeline of adolescence and young adulthood/*God was here*



Timeline of Adulthood/*God was here*



Where in your life are you most aware of *God's* presence with you?



Week Six, Day Seven

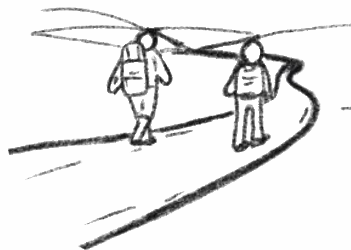


Prayer

There you were. I see it now. On the worst days. In the best of times. I see you now. Thank you, God, for being with me when I suffered, when I was lost, when I had clarity and when I was confused. Thank you, Cloud of light and fire, for guiding and protecting me, even when I couldn't see you there. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Rest: Time to take care of your feet. Find a basin, fill it with warm water, maybe add some salts, and just soak your feet. They have taken you so many places, carried you through all your life. Today, show your feet a little love.



Daily Devotions

Week Seven, Day One

Read Numbers 1:1-3



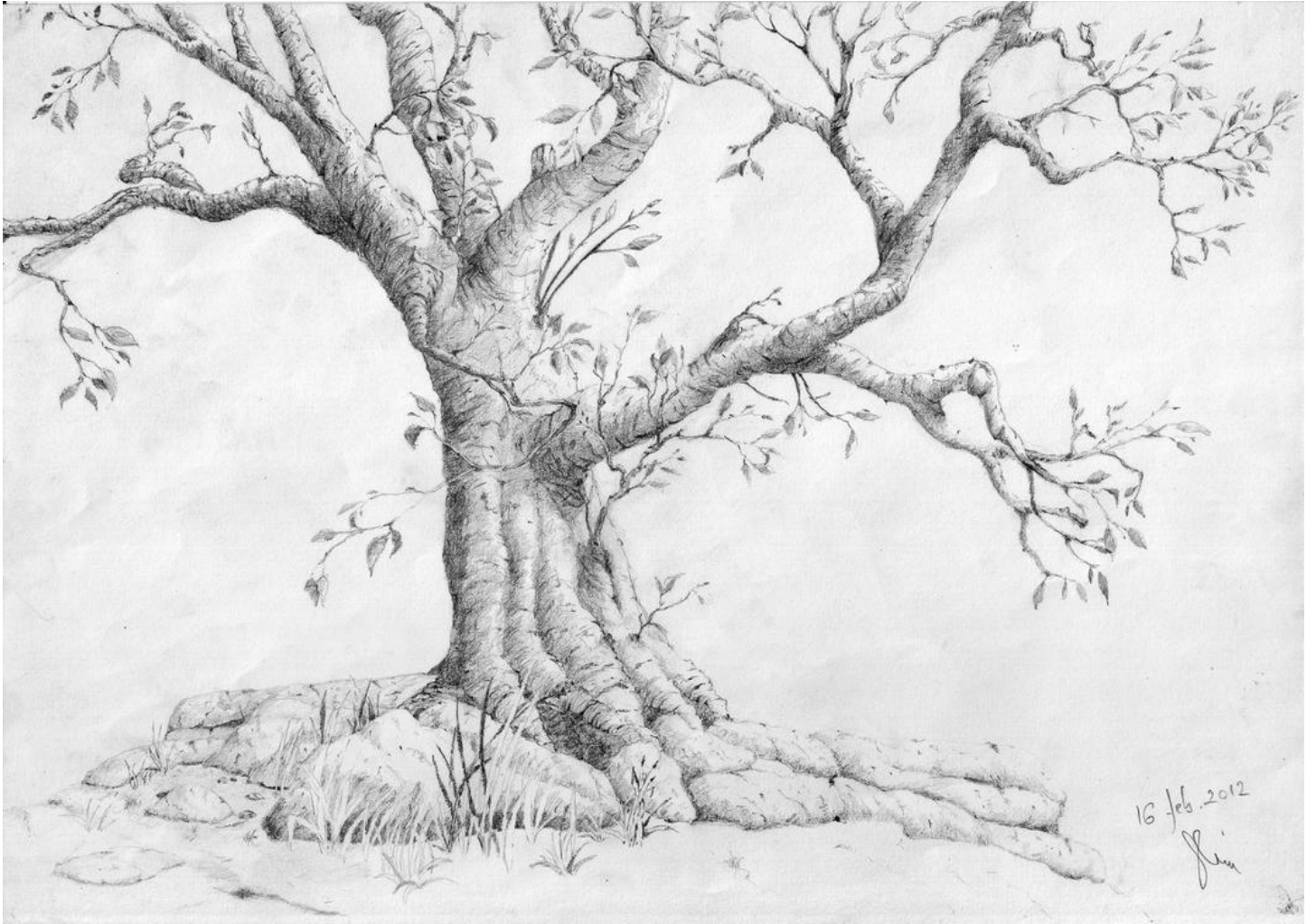
"Take a census of the whole congregation of Israelites." (Numbers 1:2a)

Reflection

Who are your people? Your clan? The book of Numbers begins with a census, taking names, family, tribe. For your reflection today, create a family tree. Do your own census, and write down the names of the ones you feel closest to, the one(s) you would call in case of trouble. Make a list of your Crisis Control Census.



My Family Tree



Those I Call Upon in Times of Trouble

Week Seven, Day One

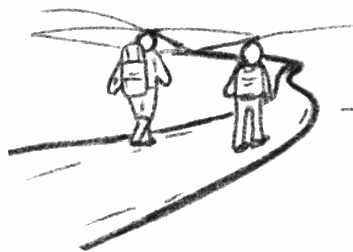


Prayer

Just as all the tribes of Israel didn't always get along, just like brothers from the same family often struggled with each other in our sacred texts, not all of the members of my family understand me, even like me. And I confess, I'm not always looking at them with great love in my heart either. But, whether it's a distant relative or whether they are from the family I have created, not the one I was born into, thank you for those who love me unconditionally. Thank you for the "census of care" I am able to name. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Inside: Find a photo album of your family or find a few framed photos and place them around you as you sit in your house. Consider the histories you have with family members. Ponder the good times and the bad. Maybe family doesn't really feel like family or maybe you have always been close. Today, just remember your roots, no judgment or reaction, just remember the people from your childhood. Remember those you think of as family today and give thanks for them.



Daily Devotions

Week Seven, Day Two

Read Numbers 6:22-26

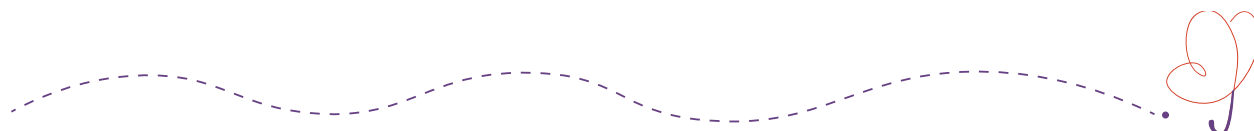


"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord's face shine upon you, and be gracious to you, the Lord look kindly upon you, and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

Reflection

This is likely a familiar blessing to you; but maybe you didn't know where it came from. It is called the Aaronic benediction, probably used in the Jerusalem temple, likely at the end of the service. It directs the hearers to remember and understand God's favor is upon them.

For your reflection today, write your own blessing or benediction. How might you call upon God to bless you, your loved ones, the world? Take a few minutes and write a blessing.



This is How I Bless You



Week Seven, Day Two



Prayer

Let my life be a blessing to others. Let the words I speak, the thoughts I hold, the greetings I give, be signs of God's love bestowed upon everyone I meet. Bless me, God, that I might be a blessing to others. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

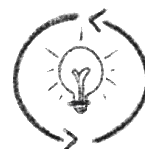
Sitting Outside: Go to a house of worship and sit outside. If there's a bench, sit there. If there are steps and you are comfortable doing so, sit there. If there doesn't appear to be anywhere to sit near the house of worship, just remain in your car but roll down the windows and pay attention to this sacred space. Think of all the blessings that have been spoken in this place, weddings, funerals, services of all kinds, baptisms, even the earliest blessings of the facility when it was built. Just spend a few minutes considering all the blessings that are given in a place of worship.



Daily Devotions

Week Seven, Day Three

Read Numbers 10:29-36



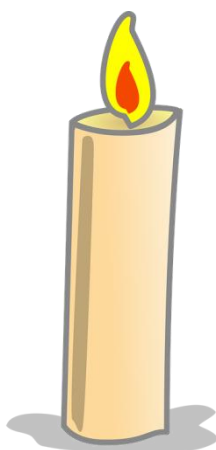
"Do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us." (Numbers 10:31).

Reflection

Moses is asking his father-in-law to travel with him. Jethro, mentioned here as Hobab, was leader of the Kenites, a Midianite clan who were allies during Israel's early history. Jethro shows up a few times in the Exodus story. He and his son-in-law appear to have a good relationship. Apparently, it was such a good relationship that Moses doesn't want to part ways with him.

Consider a few of the people in your life that you have been close to. Think particularly about the ones no longer with you. For today's reflection, light a candle for the "Jethro's" in your life who have helped you, encouraged you, been a friend to you but whose path you no longer share.

Light candles for the people in your life who shared part of the journey with you.



Week Seven, Day Three

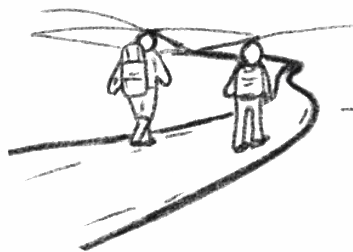


Prayer

I am grateful for the ones who walked with me at different times in my life. I recognize the attachment Moses felt with his father-in-law and it causes me to be grateful for the friends and family members with whom I have been attached but who no longer travel with me. Thank you for these saints who walked the way alongside of me. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Inside: Face the direction from which you came. Are you from the south? The north? The west or east? Find the direction of your earliest days. Hold out your hands and give God thanks for the places you have been, the places you are from.



Daily Devotions

Week Seven, Day Four

Read Numbers 11:4-15



"If only we had meat to eat." (Numbers 11:4b)

Reflection

If only....it's a phrase we sometimes use. *If only I had applied for that job...if only I had not married this person...if only I had not made that mistake...we all carry around a lot of **if only's**.*

The Children of Israel hadn't gotten very far on this part of the journey when they started to complain again. It seems they thought that if they had meat to eat, something more than manna, they would be happier, feel better, live their best lives in the wilderness.

It's not a bad thing to consider the *if only's* in our lives. In fact, that's the reflection for today. List five of the *if only's* in your life and then write what you think might have happened if the *if only* had come to pass.



1. If only

Then:

2. If only

Then:

3. If only

Then:

4. If only

Then:

5. If only

Then:

Week Seven, Day Four



Prayer

I regret a few things in my life, Lord. I recognize some wrong turns, some stopping when I should have kept going, movement when I should have just waited. I regret a few things. But I also know that you have been with me even when I didn't do something that might have changed the course of my life. I also know that good things have come to me and I have had what I have needed to make my journey. Thank you for getting me through the mistakes and the missteps and for recognizing that I haven't always needed what I thought I must have to move forward. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

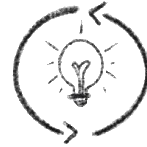
Standing Outside: Stand in a place where you can watch traffic. (Not too close!) just watch the cars, how people drive, how they look when they drive. Think about where they are coming from, where they might be going. Consider the places you have been and recognize that even if a mistake was made, a wrong turn made, an accident happened, you are still right where you need to be.



Daily Devotions

Week Seven, Day Five

Read Numbers 11:16-23

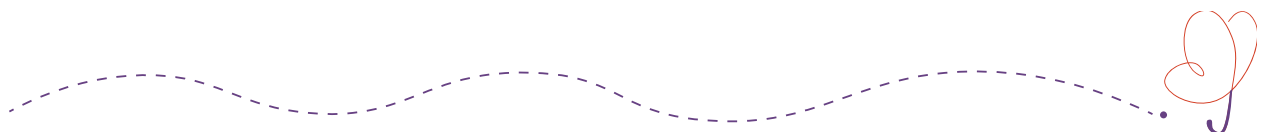


"The Lord said to Moses, 'Is the Lord's power limited?'" (Numbers 10:23)

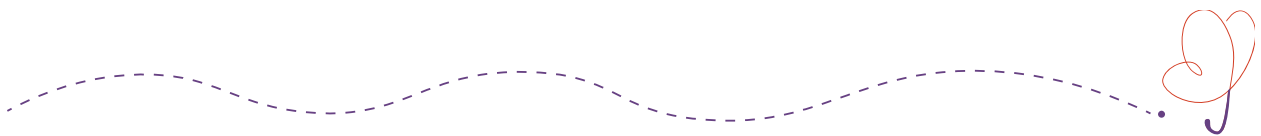
Reflection

Do you think *God's* power is limited? What about the problem of evil? Why does it seem some bad things are kept from happening and some bad things are not stopped? How do you explain when prayers feel as if they go unanswered?

Write a list of things you pray about. What are the concerns you have on your heart for yourself, your beloveds, the world? Write down a prayer list and then consider *God's* question to Moses.



My Prayer List



Week Seven, Day Five



Prayer

Today I choose to believe that your power is not limited. I choose to believe that you are all-powerful, God, and I give to you the concerns of my heart, trusting that you are making a way where there doesn't appear to be one, that you are attentive to my life and care about the things I care about. Today, let me step out on faith and believe that nothing is impossible with you. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Inside: Find a place to walk other than your home. Maybe it's the grocery store or your place of worship. Maybe you're walking in the mall or in the hospital or doctor's office. Be present where you are and consider the prayers that others might be praying in that place. Pay attention to those around you and as you see others, pray for them.



Daily Devotions

Week Seven, Day Six

Read Numbers 13-14:38



"Only do not rebel against the Lord and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us, do not fear them." (Numbers 14:9)

Reflection

Fear is a nasty thing. It holds us back. It eats us up. It stops us from going where we need to go. Twelve spies were sent to see what the land before them looked like, the enemies they would be facing and ten of them came back with a story that frightened everyone and two came back to say, "well, what they're saying is true; but the Lord is with us, we'll be okay."

What are you afraid of? It's an easy enough question. So, for today, make your list. Name what keeps you up at night, what challenges you. What are you afraid of?



My Fears

1. I am afraid of

2. I am afraid of

3. I am afraid of

4. I am afraid of

5. I am afraid of

6. I am afraid of

7. I am afraid of

8. I am afraid for

9. I am afraid for

10. I am afraid for

Week Seven, Day Six

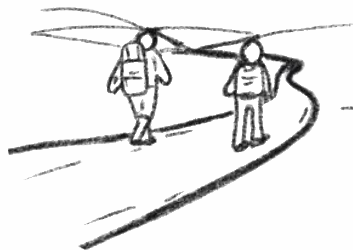


Prayer

God, I confess I am sometimes afraid. I confess that sometimes fear gets the best of me and I recognize that sometimes I don't do what I know I could do because I'm afraid. Give me courage to face and overcome the challenges in my life. Give me strength to go where I am called and faith to know you have already been there and will go with me. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Outside: Find a place to walk outside. When you start walking, maintain a posture of confidence. Hold your head high, your shoulders back. Look ahead. Smile. How does it feel to walk in faith? To decide that you are safe and courageous? Walk a bit in this way and see how it feels. Do you usually walk in confidence, with your head held high? How might things in the world feel differently to you if you walked in this stance of courage and faith?



Daily Devotions

Week Seven, Day Seven

Read Numbers 14:39-45



"Do not go up, for the Lord is not with you." (Numbers 14:42a)

Reflection

Have you ever known you shouldn't go somewhere but went anyway? Maybe you were a child or teenager and you were instructed not to go; but you disobeyed the authority and went? Have you ever just felt in your gut you shouldn't go to a place but defied what you knew to be true? How did it end? What happened when you went to a place you knew wasn't safe or right or good?

Moses told the men that it wasn't safe for them to go, not yet, not without the instruction from God, the promise of God's presence. But maybe they were so guilt-filled for not believing in God to begin with or maybe they were just cocky and arrogant, they went anyway. And things ended badly.

Reflect today upon one incident in your life where you went to a place you knew wasn't good for you, went out with a person you knew wasn't safe, traveled into an area you had been warned against. Think about how it felt. Now write a prayer of thanksgiving that you survived. Include in your prayer anybody or anything that helped save you from the trouble awaiting you.



My Prayer of "I Shouldn't Have, but I Did; and I'm Thankful I Survived"



Week Seven, Day Seven



Prayer

Sometimes I have been stubborn and gone somewhere I knew I shouldn't be. There have been a few times when everything inside of me knew I was making a mistake to be with someone who wasn't safe and I did it anyway. Thank you, God that I came through those times. Thank you for saving me from myself and my silly ways. Help me to pay attention to the warnings that remind me not every place is meant to be visited and not every person is meant to be trusted. Help me to pay attention to the ways you try to save me. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

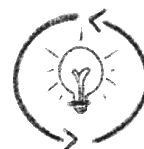
Rest: Find a scent that you like. Maybe it's a candle or incense. Maybe it's a lotion or tea or plant. Take in the deep breaths of this smell that comforts you and let yourself relax in the smell of safety and delight.



Daily Devotions

Week Eight, Day One

Read Numbers 15:37-41



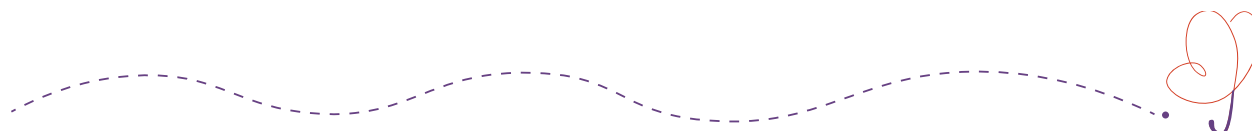
"You have that fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments and do them." (Numbers 15:39a)

Reflection

God told Moses to tell the Israelites to make fringes on the edge of their garments and put a blue cord on the fringe as a reminder of their relationship and expectations in following the commandments.

We wear wedding bands to remind us of our commitment to be in a primary relationship, as evidence of promises made on a wedding day. Some people wear another piece of jewelry, a necklace or bracelet to remind them of someone important in their lives, maybe a promise made to themselves. Lots of people choose to get a tattoo to symbolize something or someone who is important to them. We like having reminders of our values and relationships on us or near us. We mark ourselves, adorn ourselves with these reminders of who we are, whose we are, what are our intentions.

Find a piece of blue string or fabric and tie it around a finger or place it in a button hole today. Every time you notice the blue string, let it serve as a reminder that you are God's beloved and that you have made a commitment to live your life in love.



Week Eight, Day One



Prayer

There is a blue cord on the fringe of my spirit that reminds me that I am your child, O God. Thank you for the reminders in my life that keep me centered upon you. Thank you for the things I am able to see and touch, wear and hold, that serve as reminders that I am loved and that I seek to live out that love in all times and places. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Sitting Inside: Find something that is meaningful to you that you can hold in your hands or place before you as you find a comfortable place to sit. Select something that has special meaning, that speaks to you of a person or an event that was important to you. Perhaps, you choose something that symbolizes a promise you made. Hold it or place it before you and ponder its meaning. Remember the day you received this symbol. Remember what it meant to you then and what it means today. Breathe in new love for this reminder of love and commitment.



Daily Devotions

Week Eight, Day Two

Read Numbers 16-17



"They assembled against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, 'You have gone too far! All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. So why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?' And when Moses heard it, he fell on his face." (Numbers 16:3-4)

Reflection

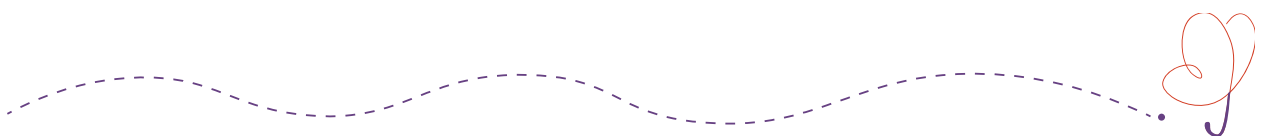
Oh my. In these chapters Moses is facing a devastating revolt. This is one story of several that threatened the community as they sojourned at the place known as Kadesh. It was not a good look for the Children of Israel; this kind of dissent never is. And Moses, after hearing from those who revolted, falls on his face. Is he distraught because of their actions? Is he afraid for them when God finds out? Is he upset about the Israelites and what this means for them?

It's not exactly clear. We do see later in Chapter 16 that he and Aaron tried to defend the actions of many. "Shall one person sin and you become angry with the whole congregation?" They ask. And this isn't the first time, Moses tried to change God's mind about the destruction of the entire people. Still, this revolt, this dissent, couldn't have been easy for Moses.

Have you ever been a part of a revolt? Have you ever taken part to oust a leader or demand change? Our faith calls us to speak truth to power; but our faith also tells us to speak in love and to honor the authority of leaders. Sometimes understanding when to support and when to overthrow can be difficult.

Take a few minutes and find some verses from the Bible that help you know how to deal with leaders. What do you find in the scriptures that inform us how to live and work in community, especially with those in authority? Write a few of them on the following page.

This is What it Means to Show Respect



Week Eight, Day Two

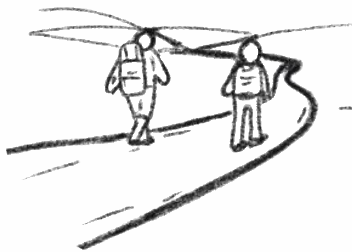


Prayer

Sometimes, God, I do not support faith leaders. I confess that there are times when I complain about them or speak ill of them behind their backs. Sometimes I confront them in public and not in love, but rather with the intention to humiliate. Forgive me when I do not treat leaders of my community with respect. Forgive me when I judge them harshly or simply think I can do better. Help me to be more supportive of those called to serve you. Strengthen my role as a community member to sow seeds of love and not hatred, to seek to bring together, not tear apart. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

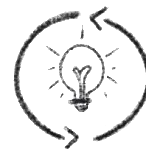
Sitting Outside: Find a place to sit outside and watch birds feed. How do they treat each other? What do you notice about different species of birds? Do they fight? Is one type of bird afraid of another? Is one dominant? Just watch and let their actions speak to you about how you are in community. How do you act around others, especially if you are trying to get something you think you need? How do you treat others around you?



Daily Devotions

Week Eight, Day Three

Read Numbers 20:1-11



"Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and your brother Aaron, and command the rock before their eyes to yield its water." (Numbers 20:7-8a)

Reflection

This is similar to an earlier story of the Israelites begging for water. It's not surprising. The wilderness journey can leave you thirsty. Living in the desert can remind you how important water can be. But water from a rock? Is that believable? Is that even possible? Once again, God creates a miracle for the people to survive in the wilderness, this time it is water from an unlikely source.

A haiku is a style of short poetry that originated in Japan. Traditionally, it consists of three phrases that are composed of seventeen phonetic units in a Five, Seven, Five pattern that includes an insight the poet makes about something observed or experienced.

For example:

(5 syllables) The night is so dark.

(7 syllables) I see the moon reflect light.

(5 syllables) The sky brings me peace.

Write a haiku with the first line being:

Water from a rock...



Week Eight, Day Three

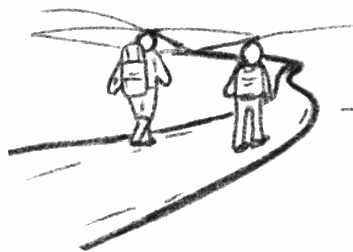


Prayer

God, I thirst. I thirst for joy, for peace in the world, for relief from sorrow, for hope. I thirst for community and connection, for meaning and purpose. On this day, quench my thirst and enable me to imagine your gifts coming from the most unlikely places. Help me to see stones and boulders and rocks that trip me up or impede my journey as vessels of your miracles. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

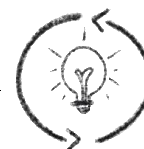
Standing Inside: Find a stone, one that you can hold comfortably in your hands. Stand still and hold the stone, look closely at it, feel the surface and the weight of the stone. Wrap your fingers around it and hold it near your heart. Consider the uses of rocks and stones. Think of places you have been, places you have stood that were rocky. Consider how a stone speaks to you of how to live in faith.



Daily Devotions

Week Eight, Day Four

Read Numbers 20:9-13



"And he said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?' Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank."
(Numbers 20:10b-11)

Reflection

Moses is punished for this action or for what he said or for what he didn't say. The scholars say that God didn't allow Moses into the Promised Land because he failed to interpret the giving of the water as a sign from God. He just did what God said but he didn't explain what it meant, who was really doing it.

If we say the words he said to the Israelites, call them what he called them, "*Listen, you rebels...*" Moses sounds a little curt. He sounds a little fed up; and why wouldn't he be? They have complained the entire way. They have built an idol, been in a revolt, and whined about everything. Moses sounds like he is done and maybe he was in agreement with God that he didn't want to go with them into the Promised Land. Maybe this was an important moment for Moses when it became clear to him that he wasn't the leader the people needed any longer, that someone else would need to step forward to lead the Israelites in the next phase of their journey.

Have you ever felt like your time was finished with a job or a relationship? Have you ever known in your heart that your work was complete and someone else needed to take over?

Write a little about that time in your life. What were the factors that helped you learn it was time to move on and let go?

Here Was When I Knew It Was Time to Go



Week Eight, Day Four

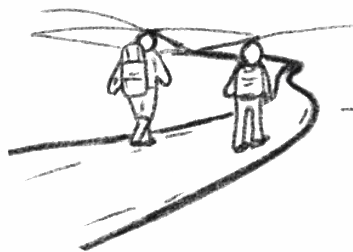


Prayer

God, I recognize there are seasons in my life, seasons to begin, seasons to stay, seasons to leave. Help me to pay attention to the call of my heart and know your divine wisdom in discerning the season I am in. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Standing Outside: Stand facing in the direction of a body of water. Perhaps it is a river. Maybe you are able to see it, if not envision the water you are facing. See it in your mind's eye as it flows past you. Close your eyes and consider the movement of your life, the things that come and go, the jobs, the people. Feel yourself let go and trust the movement of the water.



Daily Devotions

Week Eight, Day Five

Read Numbers 22



"Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you, that you have struck me three times?'" (Numbers 22:28).

Reflection

God opens the mouth of a donkey. God lets an animal speak. Later when Balaam encounters the angel on his path, he is told to speak only what he is told by God to speak.

Have you ever heard a word from God from an unlikely person or place? Have you ever considered someone or something unable to teach you anything? Have you ever been surprised by a lesson learned from an unlikely source?

Write a little about an unlikely teacher in your life.



Here I Encountered an Unlikely Teacher



Week Eight, Day Five

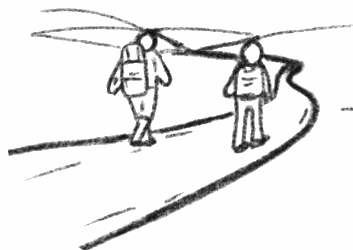


Prayer

God, you are always teaching me. Sometimes I learn from traditional teachers and sometimes I learn lessons from the most surprising places, the most unlikely people, the most unexpected circumstances. Help me to be attentive to the teachers on my path, even those I initially want to discount. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Inside: Take a trip to the local library or to a bookstore. Walk around and notice all the books. What are some of the lessons they promise to teach you? What are some of the names of the "teachers" you are interested in reading? What are some of the books you have already read that gave you important insight?



Daily Devotions

Week Eight, Day Six

Read Numbers 32



"They continued, 'If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession; do not make us cross the Jordan.'" (Numbers 32:5)

Reflection

Did you know there were two tribes that didn't want to cross the Jordan, didn't want to go all the way to the Promised Land? Did you know the Reubenites and Gadites decided they were just fine where they were? That there were two tribes that appear to have settled for less than what was promised to them?

It could have been for the reason they give; maybe they were very happy where they landed. Maybe they thought this is as good as it gets and it was exactly what they said. This is the land they wanted. But maybe it was something else. Maybe they were tired. Maybe they were weary or just exhausted from the entire adventure. It happens.

They promise to fight for their kindred. They promise to do what is required of them for everyone to safely arrive in their new home. But they don't want to journey forward. They don't want to enjoy what has been promised to them. They just want to stop where they are, make homes where they are. They don't want to go any further.

Have you ever stopped along the journey and said that's enough? I'm done. I can't go any further? Have you ever settled for less in your life?

Make a list of things you started but never finished. Is there anything you want to pick back up and try again?

1. I started _____ and didn't finish.

2. I started _____ and never finished.

3. I started _____ but never finished.

4. I'd like to try this again:

5. I'd like to give this a try again:



Week Eight, Day Six

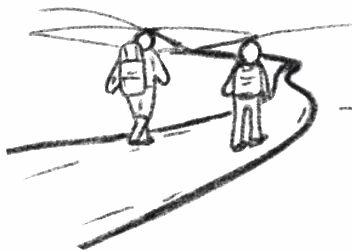


Prayer

There is sometimes good reason for stopping something I started. Sometimes, God, I started a thing that wasn't any good for me or I began a path that really wasn't meant to be. But I've also given up along the way because I lost interest or became bored or was just weary of the costs. Help me to persevere along the paths I need to walk. Help me not to settle for less but to keep believing in your promises. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Walking Outside: Think of a destination you would like to find. *Get* to it but don't go all the way there. Walk part of the way and stop just before getting to the finish line. Maybe you can see the destination. Maybe you just know, from past experiences, that the end lies just over a hill or around a curve. But stop. Consider the times in your life when you didn't go all the way to see something to its end or fruition. Consider what it feels like not to get all the way to where you had planned.



Daily Devotions

Week Eight, Day Seven

Read Deuteronomy 1:1-8



"The Lord our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Resume your journey, and go...'" (Numbers 1:6-7a)

Reflection

The journey the Israelites made was typically an eleven-day journey. Instead it took them forty years. They wandered a long time. They seemed to have walked like the old phrase, "one step forward, three steps back."

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt like you weren't getting anywhere in your professional life? Your relationships? Your spiritual journey?

Have you ever felt like you were stuck on some mountain, walking around and around it but not getting anywhere?

Reflect upon a mountain where you are stuck. Think about something in your life where you are not feeling movement or life, that you're just stuck in a rut. Write three affirmations about moving away from this mountain. For example: I do not need this habit (mountain) any longer. I am ready to move on, etc.

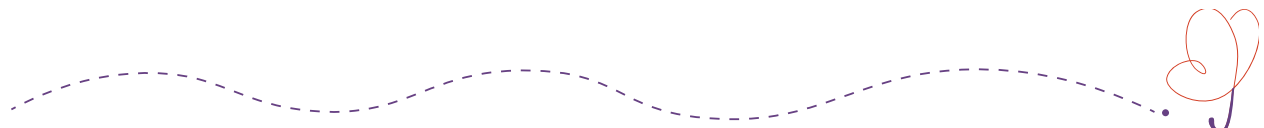


Affirmations To Leave the Mountain

1.

2.

3.



Week Eight, Day Seven

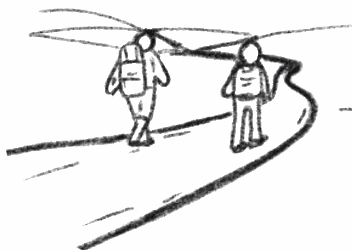


Prayer

There are a few places in my life, God, where I can't seem to get going. I am stuck, walking around and around the same excuses, operating in the same patterns, doing the same thing over and over. Help me to break this habit. Help me to move beyond where I am stuck. Help me to let go of this mountain and help me to resume the journey of faith. Amen.

Pilgrimage Posture

Rest: This is the last day of your personal time of reflection upon the Exodus of the Children of Israel. It is the final day of these devotions. Light a candle to celebrate the work you have done. Find a comfortable place and rest in the remembrance of the things you have learned, the changes you have made, the prayers you have prayed.



And now as I walk this path of life, O God,
Order my steps in your word.
Bless my going and my resting,
Bless those journeying alongside.
Steady my feet, strengthen my back,
and open my eyes so that insight and beauty
never go unnoticed.

And when I am lost or weary or cannot find my way,
remind me that no matter how I might
wander, stumble, or fall,
I have never been nor will I ever be
walking this path alone.

-Amen.



Reflection Page

Reflection Page

Reflection Page

Reflection Page

Reflection Page