A **PRAYER COMPANION** TO BECOME FAMILIAR
WITH GOD'S **PROMISES** FOR YOU

Look at the Stars

THECATHOLICBIBLECLASSWITHMON

Welcome to your Prayer Companion "Look at the Stars"

This Prayer Companion is designed to accompany you on a journey of discovering God's promises for you throughout Scripture. We will start with the story of Abraham & the promises God gave him. (This is where the imagery of stars comes in to play!) But God's promises are not in any single book of the Bible; they are all throughout, woven into prophecies and poem books, stories, and sermons. By praying with this guide, my hope is that you are able to *understand and claim that these promises are for you too*.

My relationship with God shifted when I realized that he had messages of hope and promises of goodness for me. I knew he loved me "in general", but when I had eyes to see the particulars of his words, it drew me deeper. My prayer life grew in richness. I was able to live more confidently as God's beloved. *I want the same for you*.

I started highlighting and pursuing God's promises in Scripture when I had my firstborn daughter. I realized that one day, she would come home to me, crying and heartbroken over some situation, and she would look to *me* to have words of wisdom to give her.

I felt hopelessly inadequate.

I knew right then I wanted to spend the next years preparing for that. Stockpiling Scripture in my heart. Feeding *myself* Promises so that they would naturally be my first reaction to speak to my children and my loved ones. To be honest, I didn't set out to find God's promises to fall more deeply in love with him or to feel more secure in my identity, but that's what happened to me when I spent time in God's word.

Do it again, God. May God's words enrich your life and grow your faith in him too.

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Playlist

I recommend a bunch of songs throughout this Prayer Companion, because I personally love to pray with worship music. Here is a full list:

Link to Spotify Playlist.

Click this link!

QR Code to Spotify Playlist:

Materials needed:

A Fresh Bible

I recommend that you use this PC alongside a Bible that you feel comfortable highlighting in and marking up. If possible, invest in a "fresh" Bible with no markings in it. Throughout this prayer companion (and after it, if you continue to follow the method taught here), you will apply a color-coded highlight and tab system to mark God's promises in scripture. A "fresh" unmarked Bible can serve as a reference Bible of sorts, and it's easiest to enact a new color system on fresh pages.

Highlighting & Tabs

For best results, purchase ***colored tabs and highlighters*** that you can use to mark up your Bible to visually see the promises of God throughout the pages. I love Mr. Pen brand highlighters, because they were designed to be used with thin Bible pages. (Careful - Bible pages are thin and highlighters do tend to bleed!) Crayons also work really well - this I learned from my toddler!

This Prayer Companion will teach you a color-coding system to assist you in familiarizing yourself with and memorizing the Promises. You can customize the color system to fit your needs, and use whatever highlighter and tab colors you want! This is not necessary to enjoy this Prayer Companion, but it is a method that has really assisted me. Page 13 has further details.

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Intro



I've been thinking about trees a lot recently. There's a tree outside my window now I as I write, one that I watch throughout the year in my prayer spot. It's losing its leaves slowly. It's letting something shed in order to preserve its life. Soon, it will look dead and brittle, sharp. and barren.

But it's not dead at all.

Trees can survive the harshness of all four seasons - the beating sun, the downpour of spring rain, the bitter cold of winter. They're designed for it.

And hey - we are too, Sis.

I've been reflecting recently on how the four stages of a woman's hormonal cycle are like the four stages of the seasonal year. We suffer a winter. We bloom in the spring. We feel the energy and light of the summer. We feel the death and the loss of the autumn. We **too** have four seasons, every month of the year. Just like trees.

Sometimes, I *feel* like a winter tree. I feel like a barren, jagged winter tree with its branches scraping the sky. Naked. Comfortless. Colorless. Sometimes, I feel spiritually desolate and impossible to console or cheer.

I know God has good things for me. He has spoken words of life over me. But sometimes, I can't remember them. I don't commit them to heart or memory.

This year, I came across imagery that Jeremiah 17 uses. (You can find in it Psalm 1 as well.) He describes those who trust God as a **healthy tree.** These words struck my heart.



Blessed are those who trust in the LORD.

They are like a tree planted beside waters.
They do not fear heat when it comes.
They show no distress in drought, but still produce good fruit.

I am like a tree. You are like a tree.
We who *trust in the Lord* are like trees.

We aren't going to die in the heat. We aren't going to die in the bitter cold. Come what may, in every season or time of our month - God has designed us to weather it all. In good days and in bad, I want to be the tree Jeremiah describes. A healthy tree. A tree planted beside waters. A tree with plenty to drink, with abundance, with no fears about the future.

That water source is God, and we can drink him up through Scripture. In his Word, there is more than enough to sustain us. *Do you know how to drink it up?* Do you plant yourself beside his Promises? In this Prayer Companion, I pray that you and I become more like Jeremiah's Tree.

Rooted. Fearless. Peaceful. Trusting God's Promises for us.

Getting Started

This Prayer Companion is meant to be self-guided, so ultimately - you decide the pace! I recommend moving through the book weekly and enjoying it for 12 weeks. For each week, explore the content, songs, Scripture passages, stories, etc. Maybe one day, you simply get your "lay of the land". Another day, you listen to a song and pray with the lyrics. Another day, you answer some of the reflection questions. Another day, you simply journal. It's like a buffet - come and pick what you want from it!

Also, don't be afraid to open the *same verse every single day*. The Word of God is 'living and active' (Hebrew 4:12) and God can speak fresh words to you each morning (Isaiah 55) . 'Reusing material' is encouraged! On the other hand, if you feel that there's *too much* to tackle in one week, don't worry! Just keep praying with that week until you feel ready to move on. Consider St. Ephraim's prayer on the next page. Reading the Bible is like drinking from a fountain - there's always more that you don't "get" and you can always return to it. If you're receiving a lot of inspirations in prayer, don't hustle to move on to the next week!

In each week, there are three sections provided for you.

1. Read: Understand/Context
2. Reflect: Connect / Unpack / Gather
3. Respond: Apply/Repack

These are based on the **first three steps of Lectio Divina**, a practice of praying with Scripture originating with Benedictine monks. There is a guide to *going deeper in Lectio Divina* in the index that can be applied and used for all the weeks (look to the end of this packet). The three sections given weekly are meant to provide specific information & reflections for the passage on hand.

- **In the Read section,** you'll see a lot of information. Context, historical details, facts. These may seem 'dry', but they help us to gather an understanding of what we're reading. This is also called the "literal sense of Scripture".
- **In the Reflect section,** you'll see a lot of different ideas to direct your meditation. You may not want to use them all; they are not a checklist! They give you many different ideas of how to reflect and unpack what the Lord has for you in this Scripture. *This is the time to explore "allegorical", "anagogical", and "moral" senses of Scripture.*
- **In the Respond section**, you'll see different suggestions of how to respond to God in prayer - in journaling, drawing, writing, etc.
- **The last step of Lectio Divina is rest,** which is why there is no place in the book for it. Put the book away and rest with the Lord, letting everything you two just discussed marinate.

Prayer of St. Ephraim

(4th Century AD)

Lord, who can grasp all the wealth of just one of your words? What we understand is much less than we leave behind; like thirsty people who drink from a fountain. For your word, Lord, has many shades of meaning just as those who study it have many different points of view. The Lord has colored his word with many hues so that each person who studies it can see in it what he loves. *He has hidden many treasures in his word so that each of us is enriched as we meditate on it.*

The *word of God is a tree of life* that from all its parts offers you fruit that is blessed. It is like that rock opened in the desert that from all its parts gave forth a spiritual drink. He who comes into contact with some share of its treasure should not think that the only thing contained in the word is what he himself has found. He should realize that he has only been able to find that one thing from among many others. Nor, because only that one part has become his, should he say that the word is void and empty and look down on it. But because he could not exhaust it, he should give thanks for its riches.
Be glad that you are overcome and do not be sad that it overcame you.

The thirsty man rejoices when he drinks and he is not downcast because he cannot empty the fountain. Rather let the fountain quench your thirst than have your thirst quench the fountain. Because if your thirst is quenched and the fountain is not exhausted, you can drink from it again whenever you are thirsty.

But if when your thirst is quenched and the fountain is also dried up, your victory will bode evil for you. So be grateful for what you have received and don't grumble about the abundance left behind. What you have received and what you have reached is your share. What remains is your heritage. What at one time you were unable to receive because of your weakness, you will be able to receive at other times if you persevere. Do not have the presumption to try to take in one draft what cannot be taken in one draft and do not abandon out of laziness what can only be taken little by little.

Week 1

Knowing promises with Abraham

Scripture: Genesis 15, special emphasis 1-7, 18

Read: Understand / Context

- Read Genesis 12-14 to understand what Abram and his wife Sarai have been enduring to this point. They have been traveling around *waiting for the promises* God gave them in Genesis 12. They have been growing older and their likelihood of having a child was decreasing.
- Abram and Sarai were barren and wanted a child very badly. Being barren was seen as (1) shameful, a sign of God's punishment and (2) devastating, the end of your family line. Other characters struggled with infertility as well and felt shame for this. Feel free to flip over and explore their stories.
    - Hannah in 1 Samuel 1
    - Elizabeth in Luke 1
    - Rebekah in Genesis 25: 21
    - Rachel in Genesis 30: 1,22
- Genesis 15:5 says that God brought Abram *outside to look at the stars*. But a few moments later in 15:12, *the sun sets*. This indicates that God took Abram to look up at a starless blue sky *in the daytime*. Why would he do that?
- In Genesis 16, after the covenant, Sarai and Abram distrust God will give them a child. They choose to take matters into their own hands. After this, God does not return to them for *13 years*. Imagine that wait.
- In Genesis 17, God returns after the long wait and makes another covenant with Abram. *He does not give on on Abram* because of Abram's distrust. Genesis 17:4. He renews his promises. This is where he changes Abram's name to *Abraham, "the father of multitudes."*
- Abram and Sarai both had moments of disbelieving God's promises so much that they laughed at Him. (Genesis 17:17, Genesis 18:12)
- There are three covenants God makes Abraham - each corresponding to one of the three promises he gives Abraham.
    a. Land (Covenant 1, Genesis 15)
    b. Descendents (Covenant 2, Genesis 17)
    c. Worldwide blessing through his line (Covenant 3, Genesis 22)
- Genesis 22 tells the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. God tested Abraham to see if he loved Him more than he loved the son he wanted for so long. Child sacrifice was a practice of neighboring Canaanite cultures in this time, but in this story, God shows he rejects that practice.

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect : Connect / Unpack / Gather

Is there anything you've wanted for as long as you can remember that you haven't received yet? Abram was an old man (75) when God first appeared to him to give him the promises. He didn't receive Isaac until he was 100 years old.

Have you ever had an "Abraham" moment of wanting to grasp at the promises of God instead of receive them? Maybe God has promised you something, but you just don't see how he will pull it off, so you want to take it into your own hands?

Abraham didn't hear from God in 13 years. Many saints have suffered the "dark night of the soul" and felt God's absence for years, though they continued to be faithful to him. Explore the story of Mother Teresa's Dark Night of the Soul. The fifth and sixth rules of Ignatian Discernment of Spirits also talk about how to handle desolation. Explore these, particularly with Father Timothy Gallagher!

You might think that God is willing to give up on you because you've doubted him in the past, but that's not what he did for Abraham. Genesis 17:4 - he returns and *renews* the covenant. Put yourself into Abraham's shoes and read this story.

Hebrews 11:8 - Abraham is remembered for his faith, not his failure. His failure is completely skipped over in this retelling. So too, our failings can be forgotten and skipped over by God's merciful memory. Read Hebrews 11 and be encouraged!

Consider the story of Isaac's almost-sacrifice in Genesis 22. Isaac represents "everything that Abraham wants". Isaac was almost Abraham's mini-idol. The one thing he loved more than God. The one thing he desired his whole life long. What is that for you? Could it be wealth, security, vocation, a specific body shape, etc?
God asks him to give it up, not to torture Abraham, but to test his heart. Do you love God, or do you love the gifts God gives you?

Consider how Isaac points forward to Jesus. An only beloved son sacrificed on a hill, carrying the wood of the sacrifice on his back...!

Music You May Love:

Promises by Maverick City
God of Promises by Damascus Worship
You Came (Lazarus) - Olivia Parker
You're Not Finished Yet - the Belonging Co
Defender by Rita Springer

Respond : Apply / Repack

Out of all the things you've been reading, listening to, exploring in these pages - has anything struck your heart? Start there.

Looking at the whole story of Abraham, draw a little timeline of his life, including the "high" moments (when God spoke to him! The covenants! When Isaac was born!) and the "low" moments (when he doubted, Ishmael, etc). Consider how Abraham *lost sight* of God's promises, and that's what caused him to act faithlessly. Now, make a timeline for your own life - your "highs" and "lows". Is there anything God has told you in the past that you have since forgotten or lost sight of, in the present?

Draw out a page of *stars* and label them for yourself - promises of goodness God has for you.

Write, speak, sing, or somehow respond to God, wherever you feel like he may be starting the conversation.

Is there a particular longing *you have* that you want to talk to God about right now? A desire for a child, like Abraham, or a job, relationship, opportunity, healing, etc. Go into detail and share your heart with him. Write to him how you feel, and don't be afraid to be detailed! When Hannah poured out her heart to God in 1 Samuel, he *responded to her*.

So, after all this reflection, what are God's promises for you? Write out a list of them, as many as you can think of.

- Do you feel unsure of God's promises? You're in the right place. Continue to Week 2 to get to know some of them.

The Color Code

How It Works

When you come across a Promise of God that you want to remember and know, highlight it and tab the page in your Bible so you can come back to it. Use different colors for different categories of promises. If you're feeling down, you can open any blue tab and find God's comfort there. If you're doubting who God is, you can open any purple tab and find the promise highlighted there. This is a great way to build up personalized reference book so that when your child comes to you and it's time to speak words of wisdom, you have lots of ideas of where to start.

The Category of "Promise"	The Color I Use
Tender Love/Romance	Pink
Sorrow / broken-hearted	Blue
Who God Says He Is	Green
Don't Be Afraid	Yellow
What God Says About Me	Purple
God is With Me	Burgundy
God Will Provide	Orange

Week 2: Promises

How Do I Know What God Has Promised Me?

God's word is the best place to start! Even though much of God's word is a historical story of Salvation History, we're able to take passages from the Bible and apply them to our own lives, within the guidance of the church. This is easier than it sounds! Whenever you're reading the Bible, if anything ever sticks out to you as a potential word for *you* that strikes your heart, ask the Lord, "Are you speaking this to me?"

The Process:

- **Step 1:** With the list below, flip through and find and **highlight** these words in your Bible according to the Color Code found on Page 13 (or pick your own). The verses below are in black and white so you can highlight and decide your own colors here!
- **Step 2:** Put a matching **colored tab** on each page of the Bible that you highlight, so that you can easily find it again.
- **Step 3:** In your own journal, **re-write** each of these promises in your own words, in "promise format" from God to you. (For example - Exodus 19:5 rewritten is *"You are my chosen possession; you are mine."*)
- **Step 4:** Keep this as a "living document". As you read Scripture yourself, add to this list.

This process takes time, but it's worth it to build your own list so you can become more "fluent" in the promises of God.

Notes:

- There are so many Promises. These are just the ones I chose to start with!
- Some of these might "double dip" into two or more categories - feel free to highlight with both colors or just choose one!
- Other ideas for categories include: personal ones God has spoken to me, parenthood, loneliness, faith, encouragement, etc!
- Note: when a verse has the letter A or B, it refers to the first half (A) of the verse, or the second half (B) of the verse. This indicates that you should highlight only part of the verse.

What God Says About Me

Genesis 1:31
Deuteronomy 5:15
Psalm 4: 3, 7
Psalm 8: 3-8
Isaiah 49:2-3, 6 & 7 parts
Isaiah 58:11-12
Jeremiah 1:5
Jeremiah 18:3-6
Jeremiah 29:11-14
Ezekiel 11:19
Ezekiel 36:25-27
Ezekiel 47:7,12
Hosea 14:4-9
Zephaniah 2:6
Matthew 18:12-14
Matthew 25:21
Mark 5:34,41-42
Mark 6:30-31
Mark 12:34, 43-44
John 3:16
John 10:27-28
John 15:11,16,19
Acts 2:4, 39
Acts 13:47,52
Romans 8:14-16
Romans 12:4-8
1 Corinthians 2:16
1 Corinthians 3:16
1 Corinthians 6:20
1 Corinthians 12:12-27
Galatians 2:20
Ephesians 2:10,19
Philippians 1:6
1 Thessalonians 5:5
1 Peter 2:9-10
1 John 4:4

Don't Be Afraid

Exodus 14:13-14
Deuteronomy 1:29-31
Deuteronomy 3:22
Deuteronomy 7:8-19
Deuteronomy 31:7-8
Joshua 1:5-9
1 Maccabees 2:19-21
2 Maccabees 7:20-21
Psalm 4:8
Psalm 27:1,3,5
Psalm 46:2
Psalm 56:3
Psalm 91 (all or 1, 5, 7, 9, 14, 15)
Proverbs 3:24-26
Isaiah 41:10
Isaiah 44:1-2, 8
Isaiah 49:25b
Isaiah 54:4
Jeremiah 1:8
Jeremiah 30:10-11
Haggai 2:4-5
Matthew 10:29-31
Mark 5:36
Mark 6:50
Luke 1:13, 30
Luke 5:10
Luke 12: 4, 7
John 6:20
John 14:1
John 15:33
Acts 1:8
Ephesians 6:10-11
Philippians 4: 11-13
2 Timothy 1:7
Hebrews 12:12
1 Peter 3: 14
1 Peter 5:7

God is Provider

Exodus 16:4, 14
(pick which ones you like)
Exodus 17: 11-13
Deuteronomy 32: 12-13
Psalm 27:13-14
Psalm 37: 3-7
Psalm 40:1-4
Psalm 68:5-6, 10b
Psalm 121: 2, 5, 7
Proverbs 3: 5-6
Isaiah 45:3
Isaiah 55:1
Isaiah 65:24
Jeremiah 17:7-8
Daniel 3:94b
Daniel 6:22
Matthew 6:28-30
Matthew 21:22
Matthew 12:43-44
Luke 1:45
Luke 9:13-17
Luke 10:40
Luke 11:9-12
Luke 12:22
Luke 18:1-8
Luke 18:29-30
John 14:13-14
Acts 12:11
2 Peter 3:8-9

Tender Love

Exodus 15:13
Exodus 19:5
Exodus 34:29
Deuteronomy 10:15
Deuteronomy 30: 3-4, 6
Psalm 18:6, 16-19, 33
Psalm 23
Psalm 40:17
Psalm 63: 1-3
Psalm 139
Song of Songs 1:4 , 6, 9, 15-16
Song of Songs 2: 1-3, 14-15
Song of Songs 4:1
Song of Songs 4:9
Songs of Songs 7:10
Isaiah 30:18
Isaiah 42:6
Isaiah 43:4
Isaiah 44: 21b, 22, 24
Isaiah 49:14-16
Isaiah 54:5-8
Isaiah 62:3-5
Jeremiah 31:3
Ezekiel 11:19
Ezekiel 36:26
Hosea 2:14-15
Hosea 11:3-4, 8b-9
Zephaniah 3:17,20
Matthew 26:10-13
Luke 10:42
Luke 19:10
John 15:9, 13-15
Romans 8: 32, 38-39
2 Corinthians 13: 4-7
Ephesians 3: 17-19
Philippians 2: 15b
Hebrews 4: 15- 5:2
Hebrews 8:10-11
1 John 3: 1-2, 20
1 John 4: 9-12

What God Says About Himself

Exodus 34: 6-7
Deuteronomy 4:7, 31, 33-35
Deuteronomy 10:17,21
1 Kings 19:11-13
Judith 8:16-17, 27
Judith 9: 11
Psalm 18:2 (or whole thing)
Psalm 23
Psalm 28:10
Psalm 32:7
Isaiah 43:15-19
Isaiah 45:2-5, 11-12
Isaiah 55:8-9
Daniel 6:26b-27
Hosea 14:4-9
Malachi 3:3
Matthew 11:29-30
Luke 1: 50-52
Luke 15:20-24
Luke 23:43
John 1:1-5
John 6:33-35
John 7:37-38
John 8:12
John 10:1-18 (specifically 3b, 7b, 10-11, 12a, 14, 17-18)
John 11:25
John 13:13
John 14:6
Romans 5:8
Philippians 2:6-8
Hebrews 4:15-5:2
Hebrews 6:10
Hebrews 8:12
2 Peter 3:8-9
Revelation 19:11
Revelation 22:12, 16

I am with you

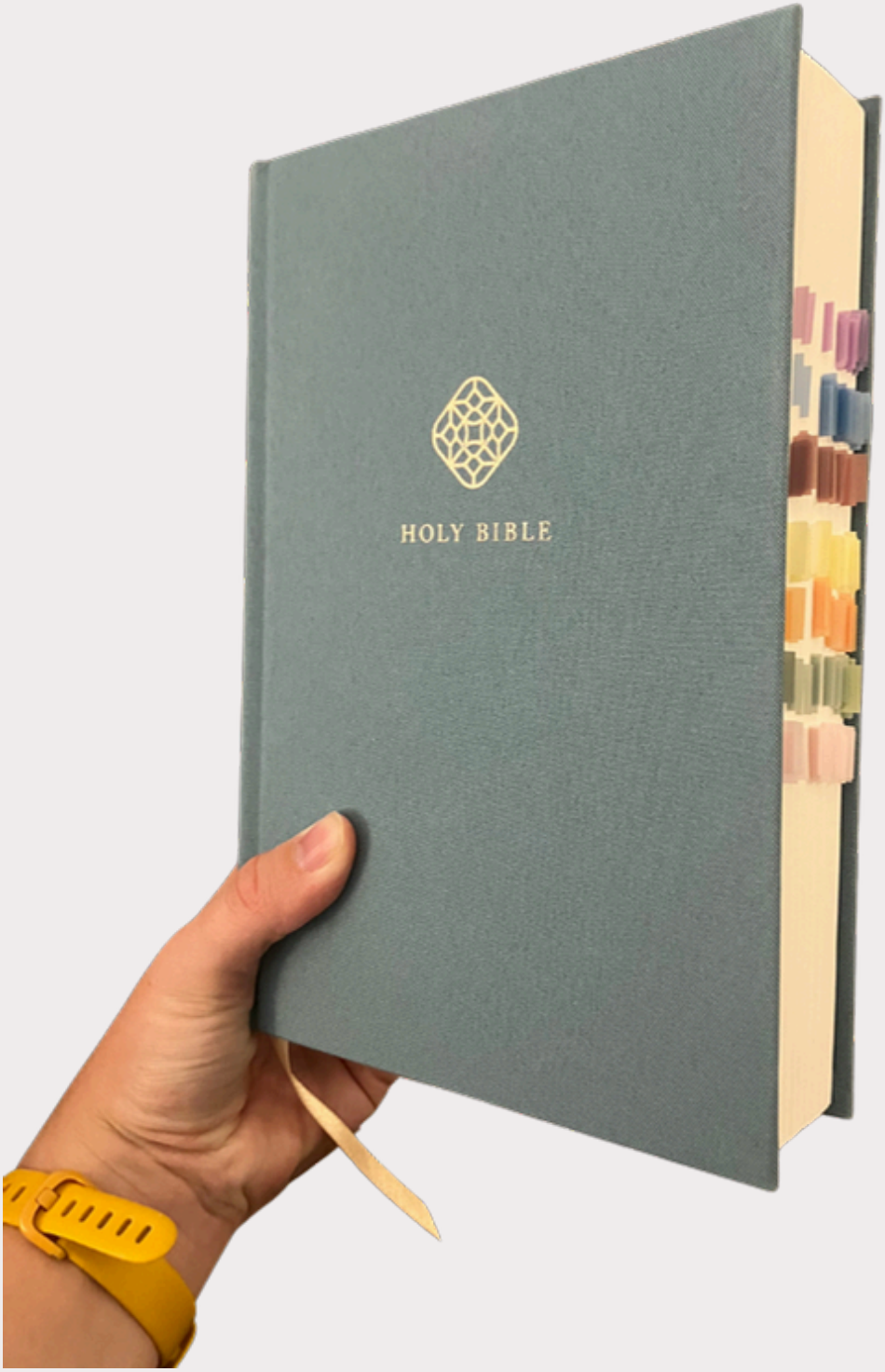
Exodus 3:12
Exodus 14:14
Exodus 23:20
Exodus 33:14
Deuteronomy 4:29
Deuteronomy 31:6
Joshua 1:5,9
Psalm 3:3-6
Psalm 23:1, 4, 6
Psalm 32:8
Psalm 46: 1, 5, 10
Isaiah 41:10, 17
Isaiah 43: 1-2, 5
Isaiah 58:9
Haggai 1:13
Haggai 2:4
John 14:18
Revelation 21:3

Sorrow/Brokenhearted

Genesis 50:20
Deuteronomy 32:10
Psalm 9:9-10
Psalm 30:1-2,5b,11-12
Psalm 34:17-18
Psalm 38:9-10,21
Psalm 42:1,5-6,9
Psalm 55:4,22
Psalm 56:4, 8-9
Psalm 62:1-2,8
Psalm 69:1-3, 17-18, 20b, 30a, 34-36
Psalm 126:5-6
Psalm 147:3
Ecclesiastes 3:1,4
Sirach 27:4-6
Isaiah 30:20, 26b
Isaiah 40:1,11
Isaiah 40:27-31
Isaiah 43:25
Isaiah 44:3
Isaiah 53: 2-5
Isaiah 54:10-11
Isaiah 65:19
Isaiah 66:13
Jeremiah 15:18
Jeremiah 31:15-16
Lamentations 3:55-60
Ezekiel 37:7-14
Micah 7:7-8, 9b
Matthew 5:4
Matthew 6:25-34
Matthew 9:36
Matthew 11:28
Mark 1:41-42
Mark 4:37-40
John 11:35
John 16:20-22
1 Corinthians 10:13
2 Corinthians 1:3-4,6
2 Corinthians 4:1,16-17
2 Corinthians 4:1,16-17
2 Corinthians 11:24-30
2 Corinthians 12:9-10
Philippians 4:4-7
2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
Hebrews 10:32-35
Hebrews 12:3
James 1:12
James 5:10-11
1 Peter 4:13, 16, 19
1 Peter 5:9-10
Revelation 21:4

Example

of what your Bible tabs might look like



Different color-coded tabs

Week 3

Trusting in Promises with Joseph

Scripture: Genesis 37, 1-11 & 45

Read: Understand / Context

- Read Genesis 37, 39-45 if you are not familiar with the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. Joseph is the favored son of Jacob & Rachel, and he has dreams of promises of God - promises that he will be greater than his older brothers. These promises seem to be impossible to come true when he is sold into slavery and thrown into jail.
- Joseph is the favorite son of Jacob because he's the only son of his once-barren mother Rachel, the wife that Jacob loved. Jacob was tricked into marrying Rachel's sister Leah, and he worked 14 years in the fields for Rachel's hand in marriage. (Genesis 29-30 tells this story.)
- Genesis 40:23-41:1 are some of the most heartbreaking lines in Joseph's story. He interprets the dreams of the butler and baker while in jail, but as soon as the butler is freed, he forgets Joseph. Joseph stays in jail for two more years.
- The "Passion" of Joseph foreshadows the "Passion" of Jesus in these ways: (1) they are both beloved sons of their mothers, (2) they were both sold for silver and abandoned by 11 of their friends/brothers (3) they were both with 2 condemned men - Jesus in his crucifixion, Joseph in his jail - (4) they were both exulted to the right hand after their suffering (4) they both save Israel through giving life-giving bread (5) they both reveal themselves after not being recognized at first sight by their closest family/friends.
- Joseph in the Old Testament also prefigures Joseph in the New Testament, the foster father of Jesus. Both receive prophetic dreams.
- The book of Genesis was likely written by Moses many years after the events of it actually happened.

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

Imagine Joseph's 2 years in jail. In Genesis 39:21-23, we see that he was able to care for the other prisoners and the jailer was kind to him. But he was still falsely imprisoned for years, betrayed by his family, hidden from his loving father. Joseph understood *suffering*. If you are suffering, can you have a conversation with the Biblical Joseph? Can you imagine yourself with him in his prison cell, talking together?

Joseph had promises over his life from his prophetic dreams in Genesis 37. These promises of greatness were more explicit than you or I may receive, but ask yourself: are there promises God has made to YOU?

- Bible verses that have really struck you in prayer
- A prophetic word a friend has given you
- A gift, talent, skill, charism, or passion you have that always blesses people around you
- A goal for your life that you feel you have dreamed up with the Lord

Even if these things feel "small" or "normal", ask Jesus to reveal more of his promises for you out of them.

Reflect back on your childhood. Sometimes when we are young, it's easier for us to dream with God and to know God's love. What were you like then? Explore that time with the Lord in prayer. Joseph had dreams when he was a teenager, and he didn't see them fulfilled until he was a married man with two sons, decades later.

In the Broadway Musical "Joseph and the Technicolored Dream Coat", the song "Close Every Door to Me" is about this time period of Joseph's imprisonment. It has profound lyrics, and may be worth exploring and praying with! Songs put Bible stories in fresh light for us to see things in a new way! (PS: I HAVE to recommend the one with Donny Osmond. Ummmm...childhood crush!!)

St. Ignatius's Rules of Discernment (especially rules 5 and 6) are relevant to explore alongside this. Check out a great explanation on the free Discerning Hearts app, on the QR code here:

Music You May Love:

Coat of Many Colors, Brandon Lake
You Say Lauren Daigel
Turn it to Praise by Seph Schlueter

Respond / Apply / Repack

The sixth rule of Ignatian Discernment of Spirits is this:

Sixth Rule. Although in desolation we ought not to change our first resolutions, it is very helpful intensely to change ourselves against the same desolation, as by insisting more on prayer, meditation, on much examination, and by giving ourselves more scope in some suitable way of doing penance.

In the podcast by Fr. Timothy Gallagher (in the QR code on page 21) that describes the 6th rule, he uses the analogy of having a "quiver of arrows" ready to fight desolation. Practice this concept by labeling the arrows below (or in your journal) with truths & promises from God!



Week 4

Knowing Personal Promises

Scripture: Psalm 139

What are God's promises for you?

So, after all this reflection, **can you name them?**

Below is a suggested schedule of seeking after God's promises for you this week.

Monday:

Evaluate your own life & compile a master list of:

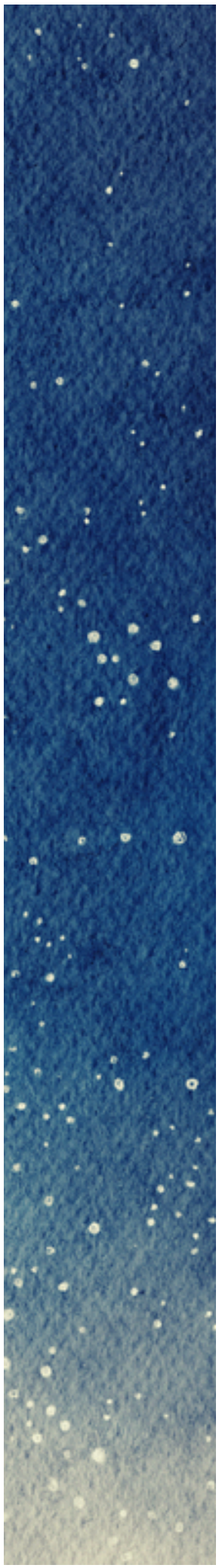
- Any moments of encounter you've had with God, or any times you've felt close to him.
- Any gifts & talents God has given to you.
- Any words from God you've received in prayer or from another person
- Any song lyrics - particularly worship songs/hymns - that really stick out to you

Tuesday:

- Timeline your life for a more visual activation, or return to the timeline you made on Page 12.
    - Write out the highest and lowest moments of your life - five or ten of each. Plot them on a timeline to see the "highs" and "lows" of your life.
- For each point, particularly the low ones, ask Jesus what he thought of you and what he wanted to say to you then.

Wednesday & Thursday:

- Go through the Promises Inventory on page 14-18, and all the highlights and tabs in your Bible - and review each of them. If any feel particularly like they 'stand out' or are 'for you', mark them with an additional tab, vertically instead of horizontally in your page. These should stick out more to you.



Friday:

- Take your “personal promises” and rewrite them in your own language. Or, if you want, copy them word for word from Scripture. Take that promise and make it something you can understand. Examples are on page 25. Make a physical list of these. It can be long or short!
- Look back to your Monday and Tuesday list and add any non-Biblical promises you feel God has revealed to you.
- Put that physical list somewhere helpful! Make copies of it! Tuck it into your Bible. Put it on your bedside table. But “end” this week by intentionally using the tool you just made - don’t make it and forget it!

Saturday:

- Pray with Psalm 139. It’s full of promises and intimacy language. Pull any words out of there that stick out, and add them to your list.
- Consider looking ahead to the Mass readings for tomorrow and ‘practice’ hearing Promises through *any place* of Scripture. Ask God if there’s anything in these readings that he wants you to add to your list.

Personal Promises

Example List

Even if I feel hidden in my daily life, I am seen by God.
Isaiah 49

My written words will bless the church.
A natural gifting and passion I've always had & I have a never-ending stream of ideas from God in what to write. I don't know how, but I am pursuing this promise through writing and submitting consistently.

I am gifted in speaking, and God will open doors for me to continue to preach even if I'm not working.
Isaiah 50:4-5
This verse was spoken prophetically over me in prayer, and then I had opportunities to speak from stage in ministry many times.

My creativity is going to shape my motherhood and my family culture in a really upbuilding way.
Exodus 31:2-4
Just as God gave Bezalel everything he needed to do the task before him, God has given me vision and ideas. I feel him constantly nudging me in this area, through people's words, my desires, books I read, etc.

Even if others misunderstand me, I am hearing Jesus and following him.
Matthew 12:7, John 10:4
A wound and fear I have is being misunderstood and judged, and Jesus has promised that even if other's condemn, I am following him closely and I can trust him.

The Holy Spirit will inspire me with the right words, even when I feel I am no good at emotional processing conversations with friends (and future teenage children.)
Matthew 10:19-20
I feel inadequate in friendship and fearful of future mothering years, because I do not always know what to say, but God has promised that he will be with me and give me words.

God will provide for us financially.
Matthew 6:8
I have heard God speak this to me personally in prayer multiple times, but it is a promise under attack that I need to consistently ask him to repeat to me.

I will be healed and restored from the sin and slavery I've walked in.
Exodus, Jeremiah 17:8, Ezekiel 36:36, Hosea 3:14-15, Zephaniah 2:6
This has been the major theme of my life and prayer as I work on health, wellness, temper, etc.

Week 5

Waiting for Promises with Noah

Scripture: Genesis 6: 8-9, 11-22 / 7:1-5

Read: Understand / Context

Read/ Understand / Context

- Read Genesis 6-9 in full to see the full story of Noah's ark.
- These opening chapters of Genesis are in the 'symbolic creation narrative' genre. This means they aren't written or understood as a typical history book. They are written like the ancient documents that they are, and they were passed down orally for generations before they were finally recorded. Because of this, we need to guard ourselves against trying to 'prove' these things happened exactly as these words say. This account of Noah may or may not have been a real world-wide flood, but those details aren't the focus of our prayer. *For more information on this, see The Old Testament Course with The Catholic Bible Class with Mon.*
- Noah was an old man (600 yrs according to Genesis 7:6) and he had very likely never been on or even seen a boat before God told him to make one. Consider his faithfulness and obedience in the face of a really "impossible" task.
- Modern estimates of how long it took Noah to build the ark say between 40 and 75 years.
- Looking at the timeline of Noah's story, we see that he got on the ark for 7 days before the rain began. Then it rained 40 days and nights. Then they floated for 150 days before touching down. During the wait, he sent out a raven, waited a week, and then a dove - to see if they could find land. Noah was a patient man!

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

Noah lived in a really corrupt and evil time period in the world, and yet he was "righteous" and "blameless". Can you relate to that at all? In your imagination, have a conversation with Noah about how that was for him. He spent 600 years (a long life) living '*in but not of*' the world.

Noah was told to get on the boat a full week before the rain began. (7:1-5) Reflect on that week - a full week of trust. God told him explicitly to do something, and he promised rain. But no rain came. Have you ever been in a season where you felt God told you to do something directly, and you were being faithful - but nothing happened? You might be in your "Noah Week".

Noah had another "Noah Week" Genesis 8:9-11 when waiting to see if dry land had appeared. Put yourself in Noah's shoes. He is floating on the ark, and God promised he would keep him safe from the flood. But when he sends out the raven, it returns to him with no sign of dry land. It doesn't look like God is keeping his promise after all. He waits an entire week. How must he have been feeling? Do you think he started to doubt God, or despair that he would die on the ark? Was his family supportive or pressuring towards him? Regardless of all that, in hope on that 7th day, he goes out and sends the dove again...and this time, there's land.

Imagine the *building process*. Noah was building the ark for years. Possibly 40-75 years. What are you building with God? Even if the going is slow, can you see that you're slowly making progress?

Venerable Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty has a beautiful quote that compares a mother building and forming her child - an immortal soul - with the glory of building a cathedral. When cathedrals were built, workers spent their entire lives building without seeing the finished result. Reflect on your daily life. What are you *building*? When it is slow-going, can you see the call and the promise of how beautiful it's going to be one day?

Others You May Love:

Flowers by Samantha Ebert

Beautiful Things by Gungor

Isaiah 55:8-9

2 Peter 3:8

Psalm 27

Respond / Apply / Repack

Look back on the personal promises list you've been curating in your Bible and journal so far. Are any of them *slow* or showing no progress? Are any of them causing you doubt? Begin a conversation with the Lord about these. Ask Him to show you what he's doing. Keep in mind - Noah built the ark for at least 40 years before understanding God's timing. Maybe he *never* understood it fully! But it's worth asking the LORD about the timeline, because maybe *he has something he wants to reveal to you in prayer*, if you are vulnerable enough to talk to him about it.

Is there a way you want to incorporate daily faith these personal promises in your routine? Putting them up in your home as visual reminders throughout the day (insides of cupboards are my favorite), reading them each night before you go to bed or in the morning when you wake, keeping them as your phone lock screen, sticking them on your steering wheel, making playlists themed after them, etc.) The more you know the promises, the more you can be on the lookout for God being faithful to you.

Are there any promises that you feel silly or nervous that others will not understand? Process that with the Lord. Noah was mocked, 2 Peter 3:3 tells us, for looking so foolish. Yet that did not deter him!

Pray with the poem "Our Deepest Fear" by Marianne Williamson.

Week 6

Promises Under Attack with Paul

Scripture: 1 Kings 11:31,37-38 / 12:26-30

Read/ Understand / Context

- Read the full story of Jeroboam receiving promises from God from the prophet Abijah in 1 Kings 11:26-39. To summarize, Jeroboam is a mere servant of King Solomon, but he is promised that he will take 10 of the tribes and rule over them as king. He will be God's *next chosen ruler,* in punishment to Solomon.
- This promise is fulfilled in 1 Kings 12:16-17 (read all of 1 Kings 12 to see the full story of Jeroboam's rebellion against King Rehoboam). Jeroboam *does become king!*
- Read 1 Kings 12:25-13:4 to see the downfall of Jeroboam. This man was chosen by God and given big promises, if only he obeyed the Lord. But he didn't. He let fear rule him. He was disobedient to God, and he was punished greatly for it.
- Focus on 1 Kings: 12:26-27 to see Jeroboam *speaking in his own heart*; he is afraid that G*od will not come through for him*, and that he will have to make the promises come true *out of his own power*.
- Go back to Genesis 16 and see that Abram had a similar moment; he had a big promise from God, but he was too afraid that God would forget him. So, he grasped at the promise instead of waiting. He too was punished.
- In Ephesians 6, St Paul warns about spiritual attack from the devil. When we receive God's promises, the devil tries to *scare us into doubting God*. St. Paul talks about the 'armor' of God we need to spiritually put on to resist.

More verses about spiritual warfare and fighting the lies of the devil:

- James 4:7
- 1 Peter 5:8
- 1 John 4:4
- 2 Corinthians 10:4
- 1 Timothy 6:12a
- Romans 8:37

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

Consider your fears. What are you afraid of? Have you ever disobeyed God out of fear?

Though it is not a worship song, I recommend you explore the song "Beautiful Things" by Benson Boone. Does your heart echo the cry of this song? Are you afraid God will take from you? Let God in there. Talk with him about it.

We often sin out of *fear*. Examine your conscience and try to find *patterns* in your sin. What are you afraid of, that may be causing you to sin? What are you trying to protect? (Ie: Do you often sin by lying or gossiping, because you're afraid of being rejected?)

The book "Sincerely Stoneheart" by Emily Wilson does a great job of revealing lies and fear tactics that the devil uses against women. If this theme is hitting home for you, I recommend praying through it.

Pope St. John Paul II was known for repeating, "Be not afraid." Reflect on this quote from him.

1. "Never, ever give up on hope, never doubt, never tire, and never become discouraged. **Be not afraid."**
2. "It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the whole world more human and more fraternal."

Look at some of the Bible characters in moments of great fear or challenge:

- Peter walking on water, Matthew 14
- Esther approaching the king, Esther 5
- David approaching Goliath to kill him, 1 Samuel 17
- Jonah fleeing from his call to go to Ninevah, Jonah 1
- Jesus praying in the agony of the garden, Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, and Luke 22:39-46

More verses specifically about fear and God saying to not be afraid:

- Luke 12:7,32
- Psalm 56
- Hebrews 13:6
- Isaiah 41:13
- Deuteronomy 3:22

Music You May Love:

No Longer Slaves by Bethel
Take Courage by Kristene DiMarco
Surrounded by Upperroom
Defender by Rita Springer
Sound Mind by Melissa Helser
WayMaker by Leeland

Respond / Apply / Repack

The following pages have some visual prayer activations (sketches that help you to understand yourself deeper and enter into conversation with Jesus). I love to use visuals, sketches, labeling, diagrams, etc in my prayer. Working through fear is a huge deal and sometimes takes time. These sketches may be a great starting place for you.

Visual Prayer

Exercise #1, page 33

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33
Song: *Oceans, Hillsong United*
How To Use This Visual:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.
2. Read the Bible story listed above and spend some time understanding Peter's fear and the scene. Do a mini Lectio Divina.
3. Listen to the song above and as you do, pray with the lyrics.
4. Whenever you feel ready to move on, *label the waves with any fears* you have that are preventing you from coming to Jesus across the water.
5. Not every wave needs to be labeled, and you can feel free to *add more waves* as needed. This is *your* sketch; move with it in any direction you need.

Visual Prayer

Exercise #2, page 34-35

Scripture: Psalm 118:6, 14
Song: *I Raise a Hallelujah by Bethel*
How To Use This Visual:

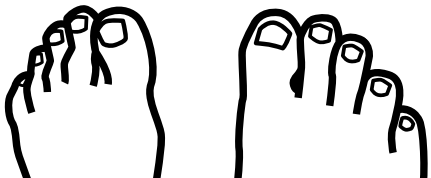
1. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.
2. Read the Bible verses lifted above, and if you want more, refer to any of the blue verses in pages 12-16. Most are about fear or sorrow.
3. Listen to the song above and as you do, pray with the lyrics.
4. Whenever you feel ready, turn to page 34 & 35.
5. On page 34, in the margins around the monster "The Unbelief", give voice to whatever fears you feel the monster is saying. They may sound accusing or horrible - don't shy away. Write down what you actually think and feel and tell yourself in your head and believe.
6. On page 35, put a big HALLELUJAH across the page, then fill the page with praises of God so that they are more numerous than the words on page 34.

Categories to use to guide you:

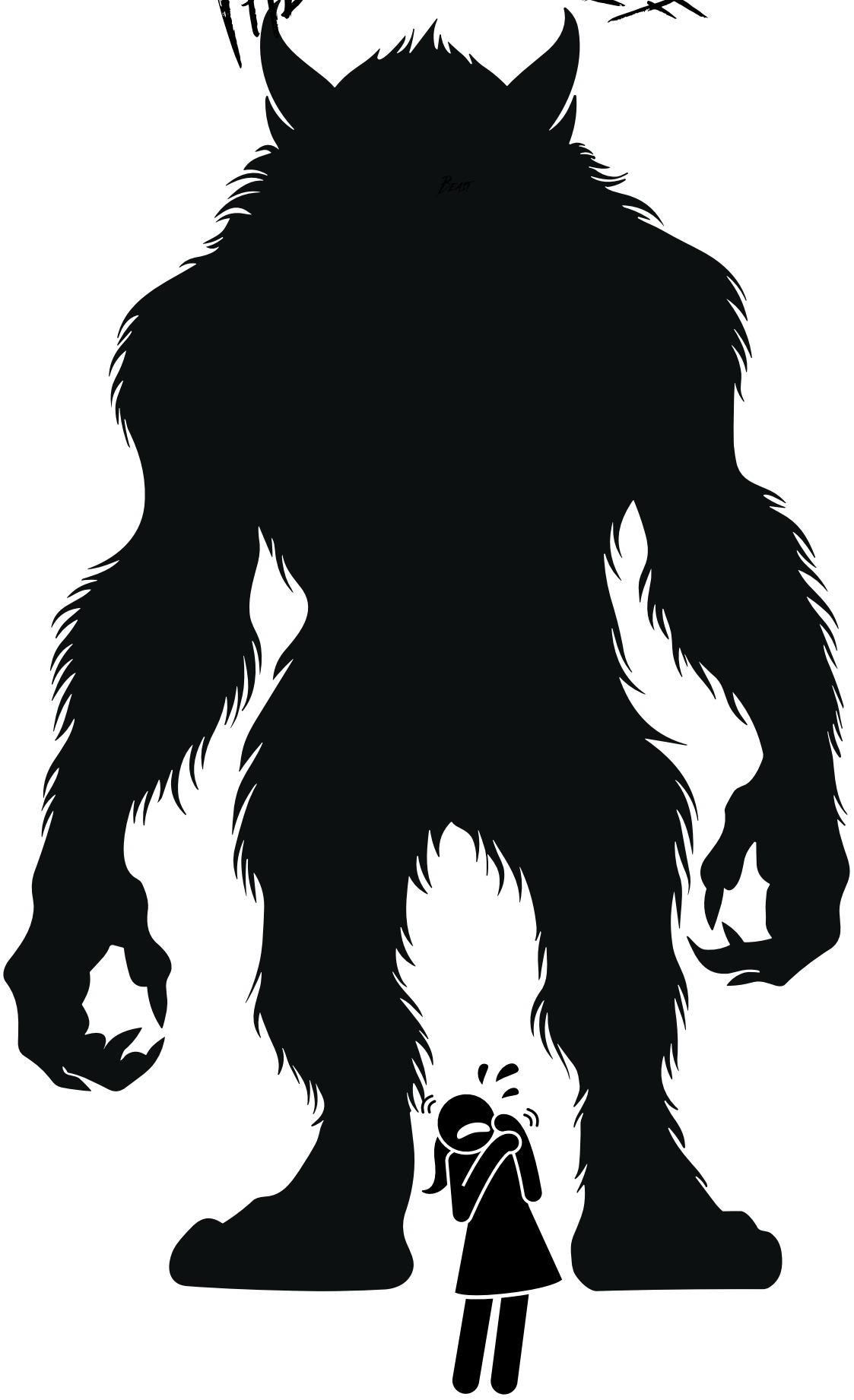
- Thanksgiving for things God has provided for you in the past / present
- Praise of God's faithfulness for any times God has come through for you
- Praising God for who you know he is even if you don't feel it
- Song lyrics you love or prayers or Bible verses (the purple Bible verses in page 14-18)
- Words of trust and confidence in God



You



The Unbelief





Visual Prayer

Exercise #3, page 37

Scripture: Ephesians 6: 10-18

How To Use This Visual:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- Read the Bible verses above.
- *Draw* out the armor of God as Paul names it. (It doesn't have to be artistic!)
- In each of the pieces of armor, write a truth (you can draw from the Bible verses p 14-18)
    - For example: shoes of peace - "I can be at peace when I trust God" OR. "Philippians 4:7: And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
    - *Note: this doesn't have to be perfect; if you get "stuck" simply fill in a truth or personal promise that you feel called to. You don't have to match them to the armor perfectly.*
- Once you have labeled and "built up" your armor, draw some flaming arrows pointing towards your armor.
- Label each of these arrows with a lie or fear from the devil that you have felt.
    - *Ie: Nobody likes you, You are a bad friend, God doesn't care about you*
- Read the Bible verse again, aloud, keeping in mind your own personal armor and your own personal flaming arrows.
- Lastly, write yourself a prayer of "putting on armor" that you can pray daily (perhaps when putting on clothes or makeup in the morning) to prepare yourself for the attacks of the devil during the day.
    - An example prayer:

Lord, please ready me for my day and give me any grace I need to resist the devil today.

- *As I put on this dress, dress me in virtue and grace to love my kids today.*
- *As I put on this belt, secure me in truth so I don't believe any lies today.*
- *As I put on these shoes, fill me with your peace so I can walk with you today.*
- *As I put up my hair, clothe me with beauty and guard me from any temptations.*
- *As I put on my earrings, clothe me in faith to believe in your promises.*

Armor of God

Week 7

God loves Faithfulness of Ruth

Scripture: Ruth 1:4-18, 2:11-12, 4:13-17

Read/ Understand / Context

- **For a recap of Ruths' story, scan this QR Code:**
- Read all of Ruth 1-4 to understand her story fully.
- Read Genesis 19:30-38 to see the sinful origin of the Moabite people & Deuteronomy 23:3-6 to see that the Moabites are off-limits for the Israelite people
    - Ruth is a Moabite woman who ends up marrying into the bloodline and becoming part of the family of Jesus!
- There are lots of stories in the Gospels that demonstrate Jesus loves faithfulness!
    - The story of the hemorrhaging woman in Luke 8:43-50 to see Jesus love the faithfulness of another "off-limits" woman in the Bible. Women were considered unclean after bleeding for a period of time until they could rejoin society, but she bled continuously.
    - The story of Jesus' hometown Nazareth rejecting him - he is shocked at their *lack of faith*. Matthew 13:58.
    - The story of how Jesus is amazed and proud of the centurion for his faith - Luke 7:1-9
    - The story of how Jesus said a woman's faith saved her in Luke 7: 36-50.
    - The story of the rewarded faith of the "Good Thief" - Luke 23:39-43

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

Reflect on the stories above. The faith of the people (or faithlessness) is really important to God. His heart seems to be moved by people's faith, and he rewards and responds to faith. Reflect on your own life and the times (maybe right now) when you may be tempted to doubt God. Consider how choosing to reject doubt and have faith may be a huge gift to God. This is a way you can love God.

Saint Therese says, "*It is good to serve God in darkness and trial! We have only this life to live by faith,"* and, *"I want to love God more than he has ever been loved before."*

Consider Ruth's choices: to return to a life that she could rely on - a home and family she knew, her own land and gods, the prospect of another marriage easily - or a life of *total trust* with Naomi. Put yourself in her shoes and try to imagine how she felt in making her decision.

- Imitating Ruth, outline two options *you have* moving forward from this day. One is to trust yourself, and one is to trust God. What do these options look like?
- Don't count yourself out if your decision seems "too small". Perhaps it's just the decision to cheerfully make dinner tonight or gripe about it.

Consider the Agony in the Garden, when Jesus wanted the support of his friends and they let him down. Maybe this season of your faithfulness can comfort his heart. You can be there for him and not doubt or abandon or 'fall asleep' on him in his hour of need.

Pray with the lyrics of "Move Your Heart" by Maverick City. The song is about lavishing love on God. We know from Scripture God's "love language" seems to be faith.

Music You May Love:

Give me Faith by Elevation Worship
Won't Start Now by Seph Schlueter
Hard Fought Hallelujah by Brandon Lake
Stay by Seph Schlueter
Find Me by Jonathan David & Melissa Helser

Respond / Apply / Repack

If you've never tried the practice of writing letters to Bible characters or saints, it may feel a bit foreign. It's more common to write a letter directly to the Lord, because prayer is conversation *with God*. But for devotional purposes, I've found it helpful to write directly to saints and Bible characters as well - they are the humans that understand our flaws. We don't talk to dead people when we pray. We talk to *alive people* in Heaven, the Church Triumphant!

Consider writing a letter to Ruth. Perhaps in putting pen to paper, you'll be able to express, relate, and understand her more. Ask her how she felt making her decision. Tell her your situation, and relate to her if it's hard to be faithful. Ask for her help.

Week 8

Looking to Your Home

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 // Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7

Did you know Moses didn't get to go into the Promised Land?
Yeah, *tough*.
He got punished for his distrust in God at Meribah, in the desert. Even prophets & leaders are not exempt from obedience to God. Moses knew his punishment, so he spent his last days preparing the Chosen People for what was ahead of them sans him - homecoming. Conquering the enemy and reclaiming their homeland. *War.* In Deuteronomy - a long speech given by Moses to the people - Moses writes the famous words that have come to be known as the *Shema:*

"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength.
Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates."

Shema means *listen*.
Deuteronomy is all about *listening and remembering* what God has said and done.
This instruction is clear: remember, remember, remember! Pass it on to your children! Make it a priority in your home. The next generation of Israelites - and on and on after that - failed to do this. They *forgot* their history with God, and it caused them to sin.

So, now it's time to consider our own lives. Are we remembering what God has promised us? Are we *listening* to his promises actively - binding them on our arms, teaching them to our children, writing them on the doorposts of our houses?

If not - it's time to begin.

Practical Brainstorm

Below are some ideas for incorporating God's promises into your life, habits, and home. This week, every day in prayer, ask God for how He wants you to bring his words into your home. Ask him to instruct you specifically and to highlight options for you and your routine & your family. Let these ideas below inspire you or get your wheels turning!

Purchase a fresh Bible for each of your children and read it - for them - highlighting promises, stories, and passages that you want them to remember. Mark up the margins. Leave them notes. Or have Mom highlight in pink and Dad in blue to pass on your favorite or meaningful verses to them. Give this Bible to each child at their Confirmation or at some significant event.

Put Bible verse memorization cards in a frame somewhere in your home where you can see them. Instill a habit of reading them aloud together with your family or roommates. Before and after grace for each meal? After you brush your teeth? At the diaper changing station? Wherever you will see and be able to recite them aloud. Switch to a new verse when you are satisfied that you've memorized the old.

Use your Personal Promise list strategically. Read it aloud every morning, or every night as the last thing you do before bed.

Leave reminders on your phone or TV - whatever coping device you choose - to find comfort in God's word instead of in it.

Use the tabs you've made in your Bible. When you feel sad, go find the blue passages and read them to yourself. When you feel like you need God's romance, go to the pink passages. Use them - often. Leave that tabbed Bible somewhere you'll pick it up.

Make a household rule that nothing is to be set on a Bible - just as a small act of honoring the Bible. Your children will catch on sooner than you may expect! Mark Hart swears by this home habit to build love for the Bible.

Pray for your children using the Promises. Pray specific promises over their life instead of generally for their well-being. Declare the promises over them.

Francis de Sales recommends in Introduction to the Devout Life to "pick a bouquet" from your prayer time with which to "refresh yourself" throughout the day. Take this practice to heart. In your prayer, if there's a passage, promise, idea from the Lord that sticks out, make a bouquet from it!

- Make pipe cleaner flowers to tape inside your kitchen cabinets with sticky notes to have a "hidden bouquet" that you see throughout your daily chores
- Keep fresh flowers in the house with a little index card that you keep updated of the "freshest flowers" from your prayer

If you don't feel a conviction or desire to read God's word, ask him for it! Ask him every day for fresh desire to know him through the Bible. The friends I've had who pray this prayer consistently have *amazing* stories about the devotion God stirred in their hearts!!

Pray with Jeremiah's instructions for the Chosen People in exile, in Jeremiah 29: 4-9. The instructions are simple, but it's gratifying to know that our daily work of building home and living as good neighbors, colleagues, and citizens in community is what the Lord asks us. to do! Start where you are -nothing is too small for God to work with!

Week 9

God loves Faithfulness: David

Scripture: Acts 13:22b

Read/ Understand / Context

- In Acts 13:22, Paul is preaching salvation history. He describes King David as a "man after God's own heart". Let's explore more about David:
  - Psalm 23, written by David shows that David relates to God as Good Shepherd before Jesus describes himself as such! When Jesus was calling himself the Good Shepherd in John 10, was he thinking fondly of David?
  - 1 Samuel 17: 32-48 is the story of David killing Goliath. His abundant faith in God is apparent. Here, he has already been anointed the next king of Israel, but he has lived his life as a lowly shepherd boy, the youngest of 8 sons.
  - Psalm 139 is a beloved psalm I've mentioned in this prayer companion before, but take a look at it from David to God, and notice his intimacy with God.
  - 2 Samuel 6:14-22 - David brings the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, and he dances and praises God wildly. Some people judge him, but he says he will be *even more undignified* for God. He is a *man after God's heart*.
  - When David's son Solomon is sinful and God decides to punish him, he says he will spare Solomon "for the sake of your father David". God loves David! (1 Kings 11:12)
- David was given a unique covenant: it was a covenant of *promise* for his son. It was not directly about David. (2 Samuel 7) He knew what it was like to not see promises come to fulfillment. He especially wanted to build God a temple, but his son Solomon would do it, not him. Despite that, David continued to love God and serve him faithfully.

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

David was a songwriter. He wrote psalms from his misery and from his joy, as we can see through the book of Psalms.

Here's a list of Psalms that he wrote corresponding to events in his life.

Psalm 23 – A shepherd Psalm likely written when David was a new king reflecting on his shepherding days

Psalm 34, 7, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63, 142 – David is fleeing from Saul

Psalm 89 – About the covenant God makes with David & his son

Psalm 51 – The repentance psalm David writes after his sin with Bathsheba

Psalm 18 – The psalm of thanksgiving David writes after God delivers him from Paul

Psalm 139 - My favorite of David's psalms. I like to rewrite this in my own words to make it sound more colloquial.

When you feel life's highs and lows, what is your natural response? Is it to praise God? Is it to write a heartfelt prayer to God? Likely, you and I comfort ourselves. Reflect on the example of David. He didn't try to comfort himself, but he looked to God for comfort.

Now might be a great time to explore in depth some of the following songs, or some of the songs on the Resource Page 3 of this packet. Praying with the lyrics can be really powerful.

Music You May Love:

- The More I Seek You by Gateway Worship
- Whatever Your Plan Is by Josie Buchanan
- Known By You by Gateway Worship
- Highs and Lows by Abbie Gamboa
- Make Me a Bethany by Jesus Image

Respond / Apply / Repack

Write your own psalm! It doesn't have to sound like David's, but try poetry or song form to switch up normal journaling!

I like to rewrite psalms from God to me. Most psalms are written from the praying person to God, but you can switch them to see God's love for you, or write "God's Response!" See below for an example.

Example – Psalm 40

Psalm 40 - God's Response

I have set you apart for myself.
I hear you when you call.
Trust me.
Don't falter; don't turn to sin.
There are many who have seen me
Dearer still are the ones who haven't,
but who honor me.
I will provide.
I will provide.
I will provide.
You need not worry; you need not fear.
I alone make you lie down.
I make you rest.
I know your limits.
I am here.
You can sleep soundly.

Psalm 40, NRSV

Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me & hear my prayer.
How long shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?
But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him.
When you are disturbed, do not sin. Ponder it on your beds, and be silent.
Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.
There are many who say "Oh that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us Oh Lord!"
You have put gladness in my heart, more than when grain and wine abound.
I will both lie down and sleep in peace. For you alone O Lord make me lie down in safety."

Week 10

God loves Trust: Mary

Scripture: Luke 1:42

Read/ Understand / Context

- Mary, Mother of God, is the one woman chosen from the whole human race to bear Jesus. She is obviously a "woman after God's own heart" too. Luke 1:30 says that Mary has found favor with God.
- In this passage (Luke 1:42), Elizabeth is greeting Mary as she visits her. Both women are pregnant, but Elizabeth is able to tell Mary is pregnant because her unborn baby John the Baptist *leaps in her womb*.
    - Elizabeth says to Mary "Blessed are you among women!"There are only two other places in scripture where this compliment is paid.
    - Judith 13:18 - Judith is called "blessed among women" when she returns to her camp with the head of her enemy
    - Jael - in Judges 5:24 is called "blessed among women" when she hammers a tent peg through her enemy's head
    - Judith and Jael have something in common: they are praised for *crushing the head of their enemy*. Now, Elizabeth is using this same phrase to describe Mary. Mary's faithfulness to her call - her "yes" - is going to cause her to *step on the head of the devil*.
    - Genesis 3:15 prophesied that Eve's seed would "crush the head" of the devil. Interestingly, the original language doesn't distinguish if this is feminine or masculine. It can refer to Jesus, the savior, crushing the head, or Mary, the New Eve, crushing the head (through the Savior's grace.)
- Compare her encounter with the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26-37) with her cousin Zechariah's (Luke 1:5-25). Zechariah is questioning and wanting proof. He is punished. Mary is questioning only in trust. She is blessed.
- Mary's "fiat" is a common Catholic word. Fiat is Latin for "yes, let it be done" - the humble and trusting way that Mary responded to Angel Gabriel in Luke 1 at the Annunciation.

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

Mary did not know what God was going to ask her to do, but she probably knew from a young age that she was set apart. Afterall, she was the only person she knew that did not sin. She was certainly different from everyone else. But it wasn't until she was a teenager that God sent Gabriel to call her to be the Mother of God.

- In the "before", Mary was *becoming* the woman that God called her to be. Angel Gabriel tells her she found favor with God.

If you're in a "before" season, wondering when you're going to see something happen in your life (I think of Rapunzel's song 'When Will My Life Begin?'), spend time meditating with Mary. We don't know much of her life details from the Gospels, but we can imagine she lived an ordinary Jewish life. She was hidden and humble. But she was fostering in her heart a deep intimacy with God, so that when Angel Gabriel came, she was immediately ready to say yes in trust. In your current season, can you do the same?

In the "during", Mary experienced the death of her husband, years living alone, worry for her son, and finally witnessing his cruel death. This was likely not how she expected her life with God to go - but in the "during", Mary stayed faithful. If you're in a "during" season, cling to Mary for comfort! Think of yourself as "in the middle of your testimony".

Now, Mary appears to people in apparitions and speaks to them about conversion, repentance, and the rosary. In the "after" of her life, Mary is intercessor, evangelist, and constantly talks of Jesus. If you're in the "after" of your testimony, let Mary inspire and guide you.

Music You May Love:

- Pour My Love on You - Upperoom
- Eyes Locked on the King - Abbie Gamboa
- Move Your Heart - Maverick City
- I Love Your Presence - Jesus Image

Respond / Apply / Repack

Read Judith 8, especially 11-27. See Judith's faith in God! Rewrite the most powerful words she spoke, and add onto it. Let her words be a launching pad, and write your own declaration of God's faithfulness.

Let Mary's Magnificat be a second source of inspiration for you! Luke 1: 46-55. This is the most Mary speaks at once in the Bible. It's worth looking at. She loves God for his faithfulness, just like He loves her for hers!

Week 11

Calls Beget Promises with Moses

Scripture: Exodus 3:7-12 // John 13-15

Read/ Understand / Context

- Read Exodus 3-4 in full to get a complete picture of the Burning Bush encounter moment Moses had with God. God called him to go back to Egypt and free his people.
    - Notice that Moses has legitimate reasons to be afraid; he is a *wanted man* for the crime of murder of an Egyptian guard. He also is a poor speaker; he has a stutter.
- In Exodus 3:7-10, God gives Moses a call.
- In Exodus 3:11-12, God gives Moses a *corresponding promise*.
- In Exodus 4:10, Moses resists the call and God responds (11-12) with *reiterating his promise*.
- In Exodus 6:18, Moses *repeats the promise* from God to the Israelite slaves and they cannot believe him, in verse 9. They are too tired and weary.
- When we have a call from God, there are *corresponding promises* he gives us. He will be with us. He will give us everything we need (Philippians 4:19) & the words to say (Mark 13:11).
- When Jesus calls his apostles to be priests and to go and wash the feet of others in John 13:14, he spends the next two chapters g*iving the apostles promises*. Read John 13-15 to see all the words of comfort and encouragement Jesus gives.
    - “Don’t let your hearts be troubled.”
    - “I am not going to leave you orphaned.”
    - “I have overcome the world.”
    - “Peace I give you.”
    - “I have chosen you.”
    - “One day you will have joy, and no one will take that away from you.”

Refer to Index for the “launching questions” for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

Do you feel God is calling you to any *particular thing* right now in your life? That could be a job, vocation, relationship, mission, friendship, small group, degree, etc. Record anything that you feel God is calling you to do right now and reflect/journal a bit on the process of receiving that call. (Sometimes this looks a lot more explicit from God, and sometimes He uses the natural circumstances of your life too.)

What are the *corresponding promises* God has given you with that call? Perhaps they're straight from scripture. Perhaps they're personal words. But they're attached to the call.

Moses did not want the call. Is there any part of you that resists what God is asking you to do? Is there something you're *avoiding* that you know you you are called to? A friendship, care of a neighbor, leaving a job, etc?

Reflect on Exodus 6:1-9. The Israelite slaves *could not believe* Moses – they were too disappointed, discouraged, weary, and wounded. Do you relate to that?

Exodus 14:14 is a simple and beautiful line to pray with. Moses has *internalized* God's providence at this point, and he is able to give encouraging words to his people before they cross the Red Sea.

Music You May Love:

Here I Am, Lord by John Michael Talbot

The Summons

Daily Bread by Elyssa Figueroa

On the Altar by Upperroom

Missonary Anthem by YWAM

Respond / Apply / Repack

Exodus 15 is the song of Moses. It's like a psalm. Pray with it - rewrite it. Write your own song! Think of any victory in your life, promise you've seen come to pass, or blessing God has given you and make a "Song of _____".

Do a self-evaluation of your gifts, skills, passions, desires, dreams, goals – who has God made you? Self-knowledge is the first step to understanding *what your call is*. Unsure how to do this? My best recommendation is to start with Many Parts Ministries and their charism test & education. If you know the gifts God has given you, it gives you such an *insight* into God's call for you and your purpose!

What do you love - and *what do you hate*? These questions are fundamental to understanding your call. Listen to the podcast episode, "34 Your Kingdom: The Purpose of Counseling" from "The Place We Find Ourselves". He talks about these two questions.

Week 12

Trees & Seasons

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:7-8 / Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Read/ Understand / Context

- We return to our "tree" imagery from the Introduction to this Prayer Companion. Jeremiah 17:7-8 has the image of the person who trusts in God described as healthy tree planted beside waters.
- Other places that this similar tree imagery in in the Bible:
  - Hosea 14:5-7
  - Isaiah 61:3
  - Psalm 1:3
- Ecclesiastes (written by King Solomon) has a special paragraph in Chapter 3 that claims that life works in *seasons,* and the seasons *change*.
  - Ecclesiastes 3:18 lists a time for birth, death, planting, killing, healing, breaking down, building up, mourning, weeping, laughing, dancing, seeking, losing, etc.

- "Say alleluia always, no matter the time of day, no matter the season of life." – St. Benedict of Nursia
- Look upon yourself as a tree planted beside the water, which bears its fruit in due season; the more it is shaken by the wind, the deeper it strikes its roots into the ground. - Margaret Mary Alacoque, the saint who received the Sacred Heart of Jesus image

Refer to Index for the "launching questions" for Lectio Divina.

Reflect / Connect / Unpack / Gather

Take some time to pray with the four seasons of the year in general, and specifically for you. What do you love and hate about each season? There is good to every season. Then, "zoom out" and try to think of the spiritual life in seasons too. What does that look like and feel like?

Is there anything "dormant" or "hibernating" in your heart that you want to blossom again? Is there anything that needs to die and fall (like autumn leaves) in your heart?

What *season* are you in currently? Maybe that's one of the four natural seasons, or a season from Ecclesiastes' list. Can you name it - maybe it's "Season of Singleness" or "Season of Purification" or "Season of Growth" or "Season of Rest" or "Season of Darkness" - ask Jesus to help you name it.

What season were you in *before this season*? How long have you been here? Can you track it back, to see where you've come from? It can be comforting to see that seasons don't last forever. In hindsight, can you see why God had you in that season, and if any fruit came forth from it?

Can you make a "seasonal calendar" for yourself of spiritual practices that may suit each season best? Similar to the concept of "cycle syncing" (coordinating your workouts, diet, and activities with your cycle), we can "season sync" our spiritual practices. If a rosary feels too difficult in the winter, we can swap it for something else.

Music You May Love:

Desert Song by Brooke Ligertwood
Another in the Fire by Hillsong United
Won't Start Now by Seph Schlueter
Seasons by Hillsong Worship
Every Season by Canyon Hills Worship

In each season, God is doing something, even if it feels like he disappeared. Ask God what he's building and growing in you. Consider the imagery of a large wall, or -to borrow from earlier in this packet- a cathedral. There are seasons where the 'heavy lifting' of building happens and you can see progress. And there's seasons of 'detail work'.

Respond / Apply / Repack

Draw *yourself* as a Jeremiah tree. Draw roots and label each with the promises of God. Label your leaves, branches, and fruit! Perhaps the fruit can be the good things in your life - the "fruit" your life is bearing. (A "fruit" of mine is a a growing community of friends!) The leaves can be things that are temporarily good but you know may "fall", but they sure are beautiful when you have them in that season. (A "leaf" of mine is a long naptime of my toddler right now!) Perhaps you have "strong" branches that bear good fruit, and weak branches that need to be pruned! (A branch of mine right now is 'Perfectionism' that God has been pruning for some time, and a branch that bears good fruit is 'Creativity'.) Do this however it suits you!

When it snows hard, sometimes the power goes out. My childhood best friend lived in a rural area, and she often lost power in snowstorms. She taught me that you prepare for the weather. You put batteries in flashlights, and fill the tub with water. You keep pantry staples abundant. Apply this analogy to your spiritual life. Storms can come in any season - can you have a spiritual "power outage" plan to help yourself get through it? Here are some ideas:

- Make a prayer for yourself in every "season" so that you can have it on-hand if you find yourself suddenly in the winter, feeling cold and that you don't want to pray.
- Make bookmarks of different Promises according to season, so that you can pull out the one you need.
- Have spiritual "easy reads" on hand to turn to if prayer feels unbearably dry.
- Keep the Divine Office or other wrote prayers on hand - printed, in a folder, on your phone, etc - so that you have an easy "on ramp" for prayer.
- Have a playlist of worship songs ready for easy access to prayer if you cannot find the words yourself.

Using the previous page's "cathedral" / "building" analogy, draw yourself as a work-in-progress cathedral. Lay a strong foundation of promises in your life. Are there any areas that have been destroyed? Perhaps God is in a season of rebuilding and repairing - draw that. Is he moving massive blocks around, and your life feels like chaos? Is he doing very detailed chisel work on one area of your heart? Ask God to show you what he's up to. We are the clay, and he is the potter. (Jeremiah 18.)

Conclusion

Well, friend. You've made it!

Twelve weeks (give or take) of focusing on the Promises of God & putting in the *work* to lay a foundation in your heart, brick by brick. If you've made it this far, I am so proud of you. I hope you are encouraged, upbuilt, fortified, and confident in God's love for you. I hope when you hear Jeremiah 29: "*For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans for a hope and future*," that you say in your heart, "You bet, Jeremiah! I know it!"

I'll leave you with one last analogy. (As you've discovered through this PC, it's my second language.)

If you and I were having coffee together, and someone came along and ran into you, bumping your arm and making you spill all over yourself - what would be all of your clothes, burning your skin?

Why, *coffee* of course.

Why?

You may say, *"because that guy bumped me and spilled it."*

"Not so," I'd reply. "It was because you had *coffee in your cup."*

If you'd had apple juice, it would be apple juice that spilled. Or water. Or tea. We cannot always blame the guy bumping into us. Life is going to "bump into us". As a matter of fact, that's one of Jesus' promises - that we will have trouble in the world. But if we keep God's word and his promises in our heart, then *those promises will spill out when we are bumped*.

Trust me, I'm a hotheaded gal sometimes. Life "bumps up against me" all the time, even if it's no big deal. My toddler destroys something. My husband doesn't unload the dishwasher. I am running late. I am canceled plans on someone again. Bump! Bump! Bump! Bump! But I've found that since I've started to curate the Promises and let them be what I drink from every day, my "spillage" looks a lot more gentle. A lot more kind. A lot more like God.

I pray for Promise-Filled Coffee Mugs for you all, and for abundant intimacy with Jesus in your coming prayer. Thank you for coming along with me in *Under the Stars*.

God Bless you!
♡Mom

Lectio Divina

I use the same Lectio Divina intro pages for all of my Prayer Companions! If this is not your first Prayer Companion, welcome back. 🙂 Below is an introduction to Lectio Divina & "launching questions" to get your "hands messy" in the prayer process.

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina means "Divine Reading", and it's an old practice of studying and praying with scripture developed by Benedictine Monks! There are four steps:
(1) Lectio
(2) Meditatio
(3) Oratio
(4) Contemplatio

Or, in layman's terms:
(1) Read
(2) Reflect
(3) Respond
(4) Rest

This prayer model has been practiced by Catholics for *centuries*, but there's a common misconception I've discovered among the faithful praying it. The four steps - though written in a linear list - were not necessarily intended to be *chronological*. The monk sitting down to pray Lectio Divina in Benedict's Abbey centuries ago didn't read the Scripture, then say "Done!" and move on to the "next step". There was a freedom and fluidity to go where the Spirit led.

Reading is an obvious first step to understanding the Scripture, but it doesn't have to be so *planned*. Perhaps as you read, you are interrupted by a word in the passage that sticks out to you. Don't pressure yourself to "finish step one". Linger there. Savor it. Move into "reflecting", or, if the Spirit moves you, simply *rest* with that word. Perhaps the entire time of prayer, you don't "make it past" that word. That's alright! The point is not to "get it done" or do it "correctly". The point is to encounter the Word Made Flesh through the Word Made Text. You go *through* Scripture to touch the Living God. Go back and forth between the four steps. On days you feel the Holy Spirit less, then lean on the structure of the four steps.

I hope you feel freedom to move and pray as you desire. The following pages are intended to give you ample options - a million different streets you could take - all oriented to the final destination: intimate conversation with God.

Lectio Divina

The Four Steps & The Suitcase

I like to think about praying with Scripture like *looking for a specific item in a suitcase*. There may be lots of different items to sort through, but ultimately, you know that what you're looking for is in there. Perhaps I'm looking for my favorite chapstick, which is lost somewhere in my suitcase. What do I do?

1. **Read: Open the suitcase & start to pull things out.**
    a. I approach praying with Scripture (and opening my suitcase) with the total trust that my chapstick is in fact in here, if I look hard enough. I don't approach praying with Scripture in doubt... "I *hope* God might say something to me..." No, I know he has something. Maybe it's huge shocking and life-changing! Maybe it's very small. But I know it's in there. In this stage, I simply open it up.
    b. This stage is messy. It feels like we're going a bunch of different directions. Pulling out very neatly-packed items.
2. **Reflect: Pull things out**
    a. This stage is the "messiest". There's lots of things neatly packed in here that I've tugged out. I've started exploring different places, asking different questions, journaling or flipping to other passages... But I still don't see my chapstick. Sometimes I have to shake out every article of clothing, empty my toiletry bag, inside-out my socks, etc. It takes *"work"* to pray.
    b. Don't be discouraged in praying with Scripture if "nothing comes to you right away". You're learning to speak a new language here. You may be hunting for a very small chapstick in a very large bag. Keep hope! Eventually, you will find the chapstick.
3. **Respond: Use the chapstick!**
    a. Now, you've found your chapstick! You've found something in God's word that has struck you! Now, what do you do? Use it! Put it on! Take a moment to enjoy it. Encounter God. Savor it.
    b. Repack your bag. Part of "repacking the bag" is applying it to your life, putting things in order. It's not enough to say "*cool! God spoke*!" Now, what can you do in reply? How can you *use what he said*? What practical steps might he be giving you? You can't chase down every single "item in the suitcase" every time you pray, but you can choose the one thing that sticks out to work with. Return to it tomorrow.

Lectio Divina

Step 1: Read / Understand: What Does the Text Say?
Introducing the "Literal" Hermeneutic Lens
The goal: Understand what you're reading. You can't ready the Bible in isolation. It's part of a whole 73-book library. There's word to be done in *laying a strong foundation of understanding* before you start to build layers on top.

1. What book am I reading from?
2. What is the genre of this book?
3. Who is the book written TO or FOR, if known?
4. Who is the author of this book, if known? What do I know about this author? Was the author an eyewitness of these events? If not - who was the author's source?
5. Are there any words in this passage that I don't know, and need to define?
    a. Are there units of measurement, money etc that I don't understand? I can look them up to get modern-day equivalent.
6. Are there any uses of literary devices in this passage - metaphors, idioms, slang, etc?
7. Are there any words or images in this passage that remind me of other places in the Bible?
8. What is happening in the story that I'm reading? What is the plot?
9. What happened directly preceding this story - where was the main character?
10. Can I imagine the story in my mind's eye and understand it through my senses? What do I see, feel, smell, etc?
11. Are there any places in this passage that rub me the wrong way or challenge me - why? Can I get a better understanding of what the author means here? Can I challenge my first assumptions?
    a. Can I look up articles, homilies, or commentaries on this that may explain what is challenging me? (Don't feel the pressure to interpret all this on your own! Ask Mother Church!)
12. Are there any places in this passage that stick out to me, though I may not know why? Take note of these to move into the "reflect" stage.
13. If there is dialogue, can I re-write it colloquially so that I can understand it a bit better?
14. What do I know about this time period - is there any historic context that can assist me?
    a. What world events are contemporary with this?
    b. Is this "normal" for the characters of this time period, or unusual?
15. The location - where is this, and is that significant? Can I check on a map or look up images of present-day to see it?

Lectio Divina

Step 2: Reflect: What Does the Text Say to ME?
Introducing the Spiritual Senses of Scripture: Allegorical, Moral, and Anagogical

The Goal: "Gather". You're still in the messy stage of Lectio, where you're 'pulling the threads' to get it to unravel, or making a mess in your living room when packing your suitcase. Maybe what God is trying to say to you isn't quite connecting yet. You're starting to ask the question: "WHY?"
Here is a great time to flip through to other places in Scripture and find connection points. Here is a great time to listen to worship songs, connect lyrics to the passage you're reading, and ultimately ask God, '*What are you speaking to me right now through this passage?*'

1. Does anything initially stick out to me in this scene, and if so - why? What does it tug in my heart or remind me of? Always follow *intuition* like this first.
2. Ask God, "What do you want to say to me in this passage?"
3. For stories: If I was here in the story, what would I say, do, think, or feel? Would it be the same as the character I'm reading about, or different?
4. For poetry books or letters: Can you rewrite the words to sound more like your voice, to see if you can uncover deeper meaning? Be careful - don't stray far off what Scripture says. Do this only to allow God to show you something you hadn't seen before.
5. Does this passage relate to my life in any way?
    a. Current events in my life?
    b. My past? A specific memory or period of time?
    c. My future - dreams, desires, fears?
6. If this passages causes me to feel emotional in any way - angry, relieved, sorrowful, etc - why?
7. Does anything in this passage relate to somewhere else in the Bible - pointing forward to Jesus to back to an Old Testament story? Reflect on that to gain further insights. There is double meaning - for now and later. (This is the Allegorical Sense of Scripture!)
    a. Isaac's sacrifice and Jesus' sacrifice
8. Does anything in this passage show a moral lesson of right/wrong? What is it? (This is the Moral Sense of Scripture!)
9. Does anything in this passage relate to Heaven or point forward to end times? Reflect on how there can be a double meaning, for here and also for later. (This is the Anagogical Sense of Scripture.)
10. All your memory to tug you to relevant "extrabiblical" methods of prayer. If this passage reminds you of a hymn or worship song, a poem, a prayer, a saint's story or quote, go there. God can speak outside Scripture too with 'supplemental materials'.

Lectio Divina

Step 3: Respond: What Do I Say to the Lord?

Responding to God's words to you is so personal that it's hard to suggest "best practices". This is where prayer is intimate, and everyone prays differently. My intention on this page is to give you a library of ideas, instead of a checklist. I want to show you that YES - it "counts" - whatever you are doing to pray, to respond to God, to be intimate with him. It doesn't have to look like your neighbor!!

1. Journal like John Henry Newman & Gemma Galgani
2. Sing like David
3. Write your own songs & prayers like St. Patrick & Mary
4. Imagine the scene in your mind & have conversations with God there like Ignatius
5. Meditate on Jesus wounds like Faustina
6. Talk to God very bluntly like Therese
7. Silent Contemplation like John of the Cross or Mary (pondering in heart)
8. Guided Meditations like Francis de Sales
9. Pray with your body like St. Dominic in the Nine Ways of Prayer
10. Pray with images ""Visio Divina" like St Luke or Fra Angelico
11. Pray thanksgiving like St. Paul
12. Pray intercession like St Gertrude & Moses

No matter how to choose to respond to God, one thing is central here: God is continually working in your heart for further conversion and further deepening of his love. What is He asking you to do in response to Him? **What is he asking you to do?**

Step 4: Rest: Conversation with the Lord

After the "work" of prayer and pursuing God has passed, take a moment to linger with the Lord. Sit in his presence. Let him have space if he wants to say anything else. Listen.

Sometimes, sitting with your eyes closed or your hands open is a helpful way to tell your body: *relax. We are resting. We are waiting.*

Offer small words of affection or praise to the Lord, but don't put pressure on this time to produce anything. This is just time together.