



## One week of daily readings and prayers

A companion publication to *When the Righteous Pray*

# prayers of abundance

## 1 Let's eat!

**Read John 6:57**

It was just about two years ago that my study of Jesus took an unexpected turn and I found myself rediscovering God's intention for me: to experience His Life by feeding upon Him.

The idea of feeding upon God was present from the very beginning of Creation. In the garden, God's first commandment to Adam was not to *do something*, but rather, to eat freely of the Tree of Life and not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In the Psalms we are invited once again to eat of Him: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" (34:8a). Jesus Himself reissued the invitation to feed when He offered Himself as the "bread of life" (John 6:35).

This week has been set aside as a week of prayer and fasting in the church. These are two ways that we can feed upon the Living Christ. In addition, we may feed upon Him in worship, silence, reading, meditation, and other spiritual habits. May this week be a week of responding to Christ's invitation to eat—to be nourished body and soul by the infinite grace, wisdom, peace, and love of God.

*Lord Jesus, I come to You now as one hungry comes to food. I respond to your invitation to eat of You, and acknowledge that You are the bread of life—my bread of life. Show me any "bread" in my life that I may be eating from that is not of You. I pray that my heart would be like that of Jeremiah, who ate of Your Words as the joy and delight of his heart. Renew my love for You and my life in You, I pray in Jesus' Name, amen.*

—Tim Fisher

## 2 Our only source **Read Revelation 3:1–3**

A better, happier life is offered everywhere. We're told we really aren't living until we've lost 10 pounds, taken a luxurious cruise, or bought any number of things that help us realize our ultimate dreams. We long for a fuller life, and all these options seem to quench our thirst. And with Jesus as our "how-to" for the after-life, we're all set. At least it appears that way.

But the Scriptures invite us to look closer, to go deeper. You may feel like you have life. You may even realize that you need Jesus. But if you don't acknowledge that He alone provides life—in abundance—you're missing it. Jesus is not simply one of many downloads in the iPod of life. Vacations, vehicles, and self-images will all pass away, but the person who does the will of God will live forever.

Our Creator loves us enough to give it to us straight. Either we will re-discover Him as the only source of abundant life, or life itself will slip away. We will overwhelmingly trust in Him, or life's problems will overwhelm us. We will build life around the cross, or, the Risen One says, our lives will be dismantled.

Jesus offers abundant life to all who come. But He also warns of abundant loss for all who do not.

*Jesus, may I seek abundant life only in You. This world claims to offer life in so many pretty packages, but only You are the author of life. Show me places in my life where else I am digging for abundance, and help me to see clearly that this dig will only result in an empty hole. Thank You for giving me life, showing me life, and promising me life. May I find it in You. Amen.*

—Brian Ross

## 3 Breathing deeply

**Read Acts 17:24-34**

There is something about the message of Jesus that is both encouraging and threatening. The Gospel is encouraging to sinners in need of forgiveness, yet threatening to religious people who cling too closely to their institutions, organizations, and traditions. Paul captures this double-edged message in his address to the people of Athens.

God does not dwell in their temples. God does not need ritual sacrifices to invoke His forgiveness. He is as close to us as the air we breathe, surrounding us with his love and mercy. But this divine atmosphere of God's love does us no good if we are holding our breath! Paul calls his audience to repent, to change their minds about God, religion, and faith. He invites them, and all of us, to breathe.

I love my church, but my church won't save me. I celebrate the traditions of our denomination, but these traditions are not the way to God. I am passionate about studying the Bible, but just learning and quoting Scripture does not make me a Christ-follower. Paul may never quote Scripture in this sermon, but he is no less proclaiming the Word of God, the Good News of Jesus. It is a message that he proclaims from experience and not just from a book; a message that leads directly to life that is more abundant than we ever dreamed; a message of God's love that we should all breathe deeply.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the radical freedom you offer us through Jesus. Please help me become aware of Your surrounding, life-giving presence at all times, and to proclaim this Good News to others with passion. May every breath I take be a reminder that I am surrounded by the atmosphere of Your loving presence. Amen.*

—Bruxy Cavey

—Hannah Whittall Smith, *The God of all Comfort*

“The greatest lesson a soul has to learn is that God, and God alone, is enough for all its needs. This is the lesson that all God's dealings with us are meant to teach, and this is the crowning discovery of our entire Christian life.”

## Contributors

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**4 Divine makeovers** *If you are anything like me, you have seen—and perhaps enjoyed—watching one of the many makeover shows on TV these days. Whether a remodeled home or a glamorous new look, it’s the dramatic “reveal” at the end of the hour-long show that keeps us hooked.*

But these shows can only go so far. A family may have a better house, a woman may see herself as beautiful, or a man may look professional in different clothes, but in the end things are only improved.

God, on the other hand, does not settle for making things better. Many of us settle for a few morsels of life now, but they are a mere shadow of the feast of abundant life God has prepared for us. The life God extends to us “according to the riches of his grace” is not just reworked, remodeled, or redecorated.

Rather, it is vibrant and dynamic from the inside out, freed from sin, unshackled from the bondage of this world. In God’s dramatic makeover show, the reveal is one of a transformed life—a life born anew, breathing the air of God’s Spirit for the first time.

*God of wonder, we stand before You starving for the full life only You can provide. Thank You for so graciously sacrificing Your son to die on the cross, paving the road to eternal life with You. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts to see and understand Your love, Your grace, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit so that we may experience You more fully and be changed. Cause Your life to shine through us that it may draw all people to You. We pray this in the name of Your Son, amen.*

—Steven E. Grosse

**7 Life and abundant rest**  
**Read John 10:7–10**

Appropriate rest is woven into the very fabric of life. Humans sleep every night. Weight-lifting athletes take rest days. Many plants and animals go through an annual dormant phase. Even terra firma needs periodic “rest” to be productive. In Leviticus, God commanded that the land should lay fallow every seventh year. When the Jews failed to obey, God exiled them for the number of years the land was owed its Sabbath rest (1 Chr. 36:21).

Jesus tells us, “I have come to give you abundant life.” When we think of life, we often think of activity, vitality, even motion.

But in verse nine Jesus clarifies; His sheep “come in and go out and find pasture.” He is the gate through whom we go out and find pasture, but He is also the gate through whom we come in and find rest.

Together they form the warp and weft of abundant life.

Let us not forget this sacred rhythm of life. We increase our hectic pace and pursue more activity; more busyness. But the abundant life Jesus gives embraces both going out and coming in; He always weaves rest into the fabric of abundant life.

*Lord, forgive me for frantically pursuing life at the expense of receiving the abundant life You give. I want more; You say less is more. I pursue life; You say, ‘come to Me that I may give it to you.’ I confuse life with activity; You weave stillness into all of existence. Forgive me. Heal my accumulation of activity lest I become like the land upon which Sabbath rest was imposed. I ask You to open heaven and pour out life. I receive Your life in the stillness. You are the gate and I come in. I wait. I receive.*

—Matt Lewis

**5 Love that transforms**  
**Read Ephesians 3:14–19**

*There is nothing quite as exhilarating and freeing as being immersed in the love of God. In His presence, as we experience His love, our pretences fall away; and our shortcomings are swallowed up in forgiveness and acceptance.*

As the apostle Paul knew well, it is from this place, enveloped in God’s unconditional love, that all our perspectives change. Forgiving those who wrong us, once a daunting act of the will, becomes a free expression of grace. Talking to those who don’t know Jesus, rather than a dreaded conversation, becomes the natural overflow of God’s love within us. Responding to a world that grasps for their “fair share”—and as much of yours as they can take, too—is no longer a defensive battle, but an opportunity to show the kindness, gentleness and humility that come from living in the abundance of God’s love.

The apostle Paul yearned for them to have the knowledge of Christ’s love that comes through personal experience, because experiencing the love of God transforms us, and empowers us to be change agents in our world.

Are you seeking to experience the love of God today? He wants us to hunger and thirst for His presence—to pursue Him with passion—and He wants us to experience His love! My prayer for us is that we will all experience the love of God today.

*Father, on this very day, by the presence of Your Spirit in my life, will You bless me with a fresh anointing of Your love? Allow me to rest in Your presence, for in Your presence I am changed; and use me this day to bless others with the overflow of Your love. I ask this in Jesus’ name; amen.*

—Steve Smith

**8 Victory in Jesus** **Read Ephesians 1:15–23**  
*Christianity is a religion of the cross. True enough. But Christianity is the religion of the empty cross, indicating faith in a risen, reigning, victorious Lord coming again for His people. The empty cross makes all the difference between a faith of doubt, fear, and negativity and one of hope, peace, and power.*

Yes, power! In the passage today Paul talks about the power available to every believer. In fact, he talks about a pyramid of strength and victory for the Christian—“the hope of his calling,” the “riches of his glorious inheritance,” and “the immeasurable [incredible] greatness of his power toward us who believe” (v. 18–19). Resurrection power is available for even the weakest believer in Christ! In light of this truth, “victory in Jesus” becomes more than just an old hymn. It becomes the solid-rock truth on which we place our hopes, our dreams, our needs, our sorrows, our wants, and our very lives.

Abundant living is living in the radiance of the fullness of the glory of God in Christ Jesus. It is taking His supernatural, God-honoring strength and making it our own through faith. That is what Jesus lived for, and died for. It is, after all, what a true religion of the cross is all about. Live today in His glorious victory and in His complete power.

*All glory, honor and power belong to You, O reigning, victorious Christ! Thank You for the empty cross! Thank You for the incredible power that is mine today, not by my own wisdom or strength, but by Your risen work for me. Help me to realize that victory every day. In the powerful, precious, ever-living, and reigning name of Jesus, amen!*

—Carl Shank

**6 Living stones** **Read 1 Peter 2:4–5**

*A thunderous crash directly below my bedroom woke me from a dead sleep. Still confused and groggy, I heard my mother yelling, “Dial 911! Quick!”*

*Leaping to my feet, I dashed to the staircase searching for answers. It didn’t take long; two headlights were slowly backing out of our doorway. A driver had passed out at the wheel, and his car went soaring directly into the front of our home.*

*In the morning we surveyed the gaping hole. The damage was serious, but the foundation remained and our house could be repaired. There would simply be a few nights with a cold breeze downstairs.*

*Likewise, Christ is the cornerstone of the Church. Nothing will remove Jesus from His position. Nobody can damage Him in the least, and because of that, we can be certain that the Church—the body of believers—will always stand strong.*

*Any problem with people or the Church can be repaired. There are many damaged people and relationships in our churches. But as we allow Christ to rebuild our lives, as we join with other believers, and as we rest on the cornerstone, our lives will become much more than a broken board or door. We will become part of the living building that God is constructing! We can live our lives with confidence, trusting in the Cornerstone who will never fail us.*

*Father in Heaven, You are immovable! You provide the very foundation for life and salvation. Help us to join with others in the body of Christ to form relationships that are God-glorifying. Help those relationships to be based upon a mutual trust in You. Give us complete faith in Your unshakeable nature. You are our rock! In Jesus’ name, we pray, amen.*

—Jeff Piepho

**9 Start your engine**  
**Read Matthew 16:18–19**

\*bonus reading

*We’ve all heard it. It’s that horrible thud that resounds just after we’ve shut the car door, only to realize the key is locked inside. Without a key, even the newest and fastest car, in that moment, becomes nothing more than a giant paperweight.*

*Jesus offers the keys to the kingdom of heaven to His church so that we can take part in His work here on earth. But all too often, God hears a terrible thud when the gates of Hell shut down the Church or bar the way to freedom and growth for a follower of Jesus—all because we have misplaced the keys to the Kingdom.*

*These keys unlock the power that comes from the Spirit of God residing within us (1 John 4:4) and the authority in the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:9–11). They also prevent us from trying to “continue in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit” (Gal. 3:3).*

*As you get on track for the race we’re called to, hear the voice of the Spirit: “Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!” Invite the Lord to unlock your life, your family, and your church with His power and authority. It’s the key to a new start for you and a better tomorrow for the Church.*

*Father God, I thank You that Your word reveals that in our weakness Your strength abounds. Help me to embrace Your power and authority so I can truly live as an overcomer and see Your kingdom advance in my heart and in the life of my church. I bind the work of the enemy in my life, my family, and my church, and I ask that You would release us all into a renewed and powerful work that sees Your kingdom come and Your name glorified. In the name of Jesus, amen.*

—Roger Smith