Jesus loves all

A Prayer Journal

THY KINGDOM COME

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Thy Kingdom Come is a worldwide prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost. Since its launch by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2016, Christians from 172 countries and 65 denominations have taken part in praying for friends and family to come to faith in Jesus Christ. The Methodist Church in Britain has been a key ecumenical partner in Thy Kingdom Come since 2017.

The days between Ascension and Pentecost have always been full of expectation and anticipation. As the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable the disciples to be witnesses. As they waited for the promise to be fulfilled they devoted themselves constantly to prayer (Acts 1.14). So, the renewed call across the Church is to set these days apart to pray, and each individual to pray for five people to come to know the love of Jesus Christ.

Below is space to write the names of five people that you will be praying for throughout Thy Kingdom Come.

How to use this Prayer Journal

Each day there is a passage from the Bible, a short reflection, a prayer, and a suggestion for action. There is also space each day for your own notes. Did a phrase jump out at you? Did God bring something to your mind as you prayed that day? When you tried to take action, how did it go? Make a note so that you can remember what God has been saying to you through your reading, your prayers, and your actions.

Throughout the journal there are images to help you meditate on each daily theme. Let these inspire you as you read through each section for that day; and add your own notes.

Day 1: Jesus

God so loved...

Reading:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3.16-17

Reflection:

John 3.16 is one of the best-known verses in the Bible because it emphasises God's love for everyone. Jesus didn't just love those who are easy to love, he loved the people who hated him, who despised him; he loved the people that others looked down on. He didn't just love some people – he loved the whole world.

This speaks about the action that God took to show us love – it shows us how love is an active word. God loved us so much that God sent Jesus for us. Not because of anything that we did, not because we deserved it; but because God is a loving God. God's love is selfless and sacrificial and shows us what we are worth. If God can love anyone, the least we can do is to do the same.

Prayer:

Loving God, thank you that you gave your Son, Jesus, for me and for all people. Help me accept the love that you showed me in sending your Son. I pray for my five friends. Please open their hearts to your love. And teach me to love more truly. Amen

Action:

Ask yourself: who is God putting across my path today and in what specific ways can I show God's love to them?

Your notes:

This is love

Reading:

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13.4-7

Reflection:

Love is lived out. Love is not just a declaration. It is commitment in action. That God feels love for us is absolutely amazing. It is humbling. God is always patient and kind with us, seeking to shape our lives by love.

One thing that God can really challenge us on is whether our Christian lives show something different, which is worth living for. If there's nothing that looks particularly necessary or attractive about being a Christian, then what's the point? What if we went out of our way to try to demonstrate God to as many people as we could, not just in our prayers but in our actions and in our praise? What if we were loving people, full of God's goodness, joy and grace? People would notice: they might not call it 'God' at the time, but there would be something special about us – our relationship with God. The fruit of that relationship is a loving nature.

Prayer:

Loving God, thank you for the way you love us. Please help me by the power of your Holy Spirit to love as you love, so that my five people may come to know you.

Action:

Do something practical to show Jesus' love to one of your five friends, or look through your diary and think when you will speak with them next.

Your notes:

Day 3: Thanks

First loved

Reading:

God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins ... We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4.9-10, 19

Reflection:

It is so powerful to think that even when we didn't know or care about God, God loved us. God doesn't love us because we do things right or dislike us because we do things wrong. The revolution of God's love for us is that it can't be earned. God just loves us. It is a pure gift.

Just as God loved us before we knew it, so God works for all whether they know it or not. God is working in everyone's life. Some people see it, some people don't. God's love acts for all – but what God wants more than anything is for us to recognise it and welcome it. The calling of Christians is to be those who point out how God is already at work in their lives; it is a calling to be channels, not creators of God's love.

Prayer:

Loving God, thank you that before we loved you, you loved us first. We recognise your love for us today and choose to love you too. Thank you for my friends. Please open my friends' eyes to your love and your action for them.

Action:

It is easy to take people for granted. Are there ways today that you can demonstrate to those you are praying for how grateful you are for them being in your life?

Your notes:

Day 4: Sorry

While we were still sinners

Reading:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 5.6-8

Reflection:

What's beautiful about the Christian story is that God loved us before we came to the realisation that we were sinners. Before we turned to accept God's love, God already loved us.

The love of God we see shown in countless Bible stories comes from a broken heart. It is a love for someone that feels like an ache in the pit of the stomach. The kind of love that would do anything, however irrational it may seem to others, to find what is lost. As we shall read in tomorrow's reflection, it is the love which risks everything for the sake of one who is lost.

Prayer:

Loving God, I am sorry for the times when I have not loved others as you love. Thank you that, before I thought of confessing, you had forgiven me. I confess all that is not right in my life today and ask for the forgiveness you so lovingly give. May this love transform my friends' lives also.

Action:

This week, how will I lay aside something important to me, so as to better serve one of my five?

Your notes:

Day 5: Offer

The lost sheep

Reading:

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'"

Luke 15.1-6; see also Matthew 18.12-14

Reflection:

The loving God pursues us, just as the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to find the one. From a rational perspective, the shepherd would do better to guard his ninety-nine and forsake the one that he's lost because that would be more profitable. But God's love doesn't seek profit – every individual sheep is worth pursuing.

Sometimes we can be exclusive about the people for whom we want to show love and care. In verse 2 we read: 'the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners, and eats with them."' But the Jesus that we claim to follow ate with all sorts of people. The sinners and the tax collectors were people that he came to find. Jesus went to Matthew's house – Matthew the tax collector – to have dinner with him. Jesus went out of his way to spend time to eat with a group of people whom many in society rejected.

In the same way, Jesus left heaven and came down, not only to dine with us, but also to die for us. He has done everything to find us.

Prayer:

Loving God, thank you for coming to find us with your love. Please come to find my friends.

Action:

Instead of just expecting people to come to church, could we imitate Jesus and leave our comfort zones to be with them?

Your notes:

Day 6: Pray

Let us love

Reading:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4.7

Reflection:

What would the world be like if everybody loved each other? Imagine that! Of course love is difficult because our human nature, although capable of great love, is imperfect. Our selfishness keeps getting in the way.

I think that the evidence that we actually know God is the fact that we have the ability to love everyone unconditionally. All the commandments are fulfilled in this, that we would love one another. That's it. God is asking us to love one another in our words and in our deeds. It's not necessarily easy, let's be honest! It is only possible with the Father's love, Christ's example and the Spirit's power. And God teaches us to love as we pray. To pray is to love.

Prayer:

Loving God, help me to know you more. Through knowing you, may I show you more and love as you love. Please show your love to my five friends – through me and others who love you.

Action:

How could you remind yourself to pray for your five friends? Could you set an alarm on your phone every day?

Your notes:

Day 7: Help

Love is an action word

Reading:

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

1 John 3.16-18

Reflection:

When St John says, 'Little children,' he's speaking to everyone, all the children of God. He says we shouldn't just say we love people if we're not doing anything to show that love – that if we have material possessions and yet we don't show any pity for our brother or sister, how is that love? Not to say this is the only way to love people, but that's a very practical way to love others. How generous are we as Christians? How caring are we as Christians? How hospitable are we as Christians, especially when it is not in our self-interest?

If we don't act, it's almost as if we think we deserve to be in a better position but it's only by God's grace that we're not in the position of the one in need. Jesus himself says: 'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' (Matthew 25.35-36) Everything that we do to people, we do as if we do it to Christ.

Prayer:

Loving God, thank you for your costly love. Please may my five friends understand something of the strength of your love for them. Help us to use our money well.

Action:

Look for ways that you can use what you already have to help others today.

Your notes:

Who shall separate us?

Reading:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8.37-39

Reflection:

We expect there must be something that can separate us from the love of God. But God is saying, 'I don't care where you are, what you're doing, how far away you are: my love for you will not change.' Sometimes we think that God's love is dependent on the way we act. But God is saying, 'Listen, not even the heights of this earth could separate me or stop me from loving you.' Christianity is first a relationship with God through Jesus, not first a series of activities!

The love of God is ultimately expressed in the cross of Christ, which stands for all time as the sign and assurance of God's unchanging love.

Prayer:

Loving God, thank you for your love from which nothing can separate us, and which does not depend on our efforts. Please reveal this love in the lives of the five people I am praying for.

Action:

Do something practical to show someone that they are loved by God.

Your notes:

Day 9: Celebrate

The Father's love

Reading:

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Luke 15.20-24

Reflection:

How joyfully God welcomes us back! We can have such skewed ideas of God as an angry dictator or fault-finding headteacher. But actually God's attitude towards us is compassion and grace. Even when we are far away, God is willing to run and meet us, the way this father did.

Look how it says, 'while he was still far off': the father didn't wait for the son to come all the way to him, but he went and made up the distance. God does that. God doesn't just wait. God comes out to us in love and stretches out loving arms in welcome.

God is moving down the road right now, stretching out loving arms, waiting for your friends to come home.

Prayer:

Loving God, please get my friends on the road where they see you running to meet them. Thank you that you welcome us with joy, however distant we are, however long we've been away.

Action:

Think of how you have been hurt by someone, or disagreed with them. How could you reach out your hand and meet them where they are, rather than expecting them to come to you?

Your notes:

Day 10: Silence

The sound of silence

Reading:

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19.11-13

Reflection:

Silence has always been a big part of spiritual practice, but many have never tried it!

Solitude and silence can help us hear from God, because we can easily lose sensitivity to that still, small voice in all the noise and activity of our lives. In silence, you realise how little you hear that voice at other times.

Silence can be hard. Life is busy and finding a space and time for silence can be difficult. You have a thousand thoughts, like 'what's for dinner?'! But the beauty of silence is that it's not God speaking through someone else, such as in a sermon or a Christian book, but God speaking directly to you.

Prayer:

...[be silent]...

Action:

Try silent prayer for five minutes – even if it's difficult! Make a note afterwards of anything God seemed to say to you, through thoughts or feelings that came into your mind.

Your notes:

Day 11: Pentecost

The Spirit in us

Reading:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

Acts 2.1-8

Reflection:

On the day of Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit as Helper and Comforter, and enabled the disciples to proclaim – in different languages – the wonders of God, so that people from all nations could understand.

This shows us that the Spirit of God is present for every situation. When we share our faith with our friends, we can ask the Spirit to help us 'translate' the good news of God's love so that they can understand how it affects them in their situation.

At Pentecost we remember that the Holy Spirit is living in us. Let's not get too used to that amazing fact! What a privilege we have. The Spirit awakens us to the love God has for us and helps us to love others.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, thank you that you are living in me, showing me God's love and helping me share that love with others.

Action:

The next time you have an opportunity to talk about your faith, consciously remind yourself that the Holy Spirit lives within you.

Your notes:

Written by

Thelma Commey

Methodist Youth President 2019/2020

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Thelma's story:

I am a 19-year-old Ghanaian woman who has had the privilege of experiencing God's undeniable love. Giving my life to Christ when 11, I found a relationship that would transform me. Growing in faith, day by day, through word and fellowship, I have seen God do amazing things for me and through me. God has blessed me immensely and I am truly grateful.

I worship in a diverse and vibrant church in Milton Keynes where I have the privilege of serving at Sunday school and with children and young people. I have seen God develop me in that environment and nurture my gifts. I have learnt so much from being around these amazing young people. I truly enjoy being able to be a part of the stories God is writing in their lives.

It is my prayer that as we explore Scripture and reflect on the unconditional love of Jesus, you will experience it for yourself.

Jesus loves you.

Space to write and draw

Join the global wave of prayer:

www.thykingdomcome.global

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Page 3 Photography – Hole in a Box

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