

GPS GUIDE: MARCH 5, 2023 G r o w . P r a y . S t u d y .

Series: Discipleship Pathway

Sermon: Holy Friendship

Monday

As we engage in a practice of discipleship throughout the season of Lent, each day you'll find an invitation to contemplate what God wants for you in this moment.

Today you are invited to practice breathing as you read the texts from Sunday. What questions are stirred in your spirit? What might God be revealing through the words of these passages? Sit with your question as you breathe deeply.

Luke 5: 17-20 (Inclusive)

One day, as Jesus was teaching, there were Pharisees and experts on the Law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of God was present for Jesus to heal the sick. Then some people appeared, carrying a paralyzed person on a mat; they tried to carry the individual into the house, to set in front of Jesus. But the crowd made it impossible to get in, so they went up on the roof, made an opening in the tiles and lowered the paralyzed one into the middle of the gathering, in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said, "My friend, your sins are forgiven you."

John 15: 12-16 (Message)

Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father. "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil.

Prayer: Breathe in... and breathe out... inhale... exhale... Amen.

Tuesday

As we engage in a practice of discipleship throughout the season of Lent, each day you'll find an invitation to contemplate what God wants for you in this moment.

Pilgrimage or journey is a practice as old as our faith. Abraham journeyed to the land God promised. The Israelites journeyed through the wilderness with God. Jews journeyed to Jerusalem for Passover... setting out on a path with God is a practice that invites us to journey towards the heart of God.

The labyrinth has traditionally been a symbolic pilgrimage, a “path to Jerusalem” an opportunity to embark on an outward journey reflecting your inward journey with God. You’ll notice the labyrinth is different from a maze. Having only one way in and one way out, it is impossible to get lost. The labyrinth’s path moves you towards the center—towards the heart of God—and the return journey.

Labyrinths can be many shapes and sizes, you can walk, run, crawl, trace, or imagine the journey. Below you will find a heart shaped finger labyrinth, meant to be traced with your finger or colored with pen, pencil, or crayon.

As you embark upon this labyrinth prayer journey today, you are invited to consider the holy friendships God wants *for* you. Carry that question as you journey into the labyrinth, resting in the center of God’s presence, and then when you are ready, on the return journey as you prepare to carry what God reveals into the world.



You can download and print the labyrinth here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CJ_KYy1SwaAQPv6112B0XHdq8RM8Vyzi/view?usp=share_link

Wednesday

As we engage in a practice of discipleship throughout the season of Lent, each day you’ll find an invitation to contemplate what God wants for you in this moment.

Today the invitation is to engage in a creative practice of intercessory prayer as you focus on deepening your connection with God and with others. For this you will need to have a piece of paper and something to draw with. It can be pencil, pen, crayons, markers, paint.

Praying in Color is a tactile way to pray when words escape you. If you have trouble sitting still and staying focused, your body wants to be a part of your prayer, you want a visual, concrete way to pray, or you desire a new way to pray. Take a big breath and let it out. Do this a couple of times. Start praying by drawing a shape on your piece of paper. In the shape write your God name—whichever name you choose for God today.

Then for three minutes “ask God” to be part of this time by drawing around the name for God. Your asking can include words, but words are not necessary. The drawing is a way to get still on the inside and prepare for a time of intercessory prayer and listening to God. You can add to your shape with doodles or shapes and also add color. You can pray with words in your head or just be silent as you concentrate on the drawing and on the name of God.

Ask God with words to be present, but when the words run out, keep praying—do this by drawing and focusing on the name for God. Your marks, color on the page and your attention are the prayer. If words come, pray them. If not, enjoy your quiet time with God.

Read the following:

The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; God delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit. ~Psalm 34:17-18

Next, pray for friends you know who need prayer, one at a time.

Pray for the person by drawing a shape on your paper and putting the name of the person in it.

For several minutes pray for the person by drawing, doodling, and coloring a shape with the name in it.

As you draw/pray, you can use words in your head if you want (or write them down), but the words aren’t necessary.

You can start using words, but when the words run out we continue to sit with God by drawing. We are offering the person into God’s care without necessarily knowing what to say or what the person needs. We are spending time with them and God by drawing. The movement of our hands allows our bodies to participate in the prayer and to be less distracted.

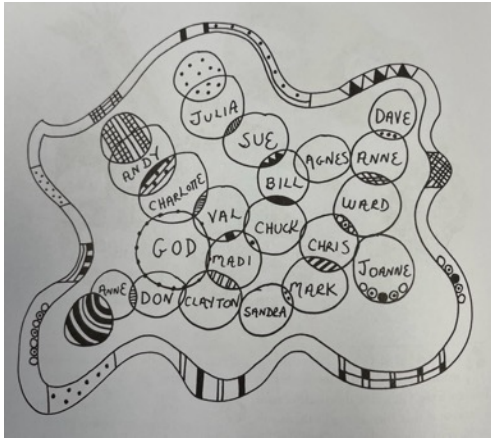
Take a deep breath and read again the following:

The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit. ~Psalm 34:17-18

Then pray for another person by name. Pray for the new person in the same way. Repeat the process as many times as you want. There are not a lot of rules to this kind of active prayer.

When you are finished, place your prayers in a place where you are reminded of this sacred time of building holy friendship.

Example:



To learn more about the spiritual practice of Praying in Color, visit the website <https://prayingincolor.com>

Thursday

As we engage in a practice of discipleship throughout the season of Lent, each day you'll find an invitation to contemplate what God wants for you in this moment.

When we offer God our confession, we join the beautiful work of reconciliation, that God wants for us. Today we offer this prayer of confession and pardon. Let us pray together...

Creating God, from the very beginning you have said it's not good for us to be alone, and so you keep calling us together to create holy friendships.

But we confess that sometimes that is a difficult way to live.

We worry that we are
not lovable
not good enough
that if people only knew the real us
they would not want to be in relationship.

And so we close ourselves off, choosing to be alone rather than vulnerable. We mask who we are because we wonder if we will be accepted as our authentic selves.

Yet you just keep on calling to us. You keep on moving us together. Give us the strength to open ourselves to your desire for our lives. Remind us that our lives are richer, deeper, fuller, when lived together in holy friendship.

Thank you, O God, for sending one into the world who doesn't give up on us, whose life was lived calling imperfect people to gather together and follow your ways.

Thank you for the good news of the scriptures that witness to the importance of holy friendship.

Help us to live together as you would desire. Help us pour ourselves out
so that together we might be filled up,
so that together we might be stronger,
so that together we don't have so much to fear
so that together we might reflect the love of God
made known in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Friday: Read 1 Samuel 18:1-5

The Bible depicts Jonathan's great love for David as an intimate bond: "the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Caroline Simon agrees that friendship involves an intimate bond. "In loving my friend, my self expands and is enriched by my friend's accomplishments and delights," she says. "This expansion of self is not selfish; the expansion of self involved in friendship is also costly. Sorrows double, not just joys, for my friend's suffering becomes my own. The compassionate suffering that is part and parcel of friendship, costly and painful as it can be, deepens our humanity. Places in our hearts that did not previously exist are created by compassion for our friends and loved ones."

Simon highlights three aspects of the love between true friends:

1. **Friends have insight into one another's true self.** One of the best things about friendship is that friends can help each other see themselves more clearly. Through their loving vision, good friends can see not only who we are "warts and all," but also what we aspire to be. Because our friends care for us, they encourage and help us grow into our true selves.
2. **There is equality between friends.** Ideally friends have *mutual* affirmation, *mutual* self-disclosure, caring and the sharing of activities and sorrows, along with *mutual* admonition and advice giving. Knowing when to speak and how to speak as a friend demands wisdom and skill. One wants to give one's friend the benefit of the kind of insight only a friend can furnish; yet one wants the story that one's friend lives out to be his own.
3. **Friends share intimate knowledge.** They may disclose thoughts and feelings to one another that they would be unwilling to reveal to mere acquaintances. And they can communicate by nonverbal *intimacy*: "I can know my friends' unspoken thoughts because I have seen them react to diverse situations; I understand their character and know their values."

Holy friendship is a spiritual journey, which both requires and produces growth in goodness, not as friendship's goal, but in order to equip us for befriending. "Being a friend requires strength of character. As we strive to do what friendship calls for, we will grow.

How has holy friendship helped you grow in your spiritual journey? In what ways has holy friendship deepened your strength of character?

Saturday

As we engage in a practice of discipleship throughout the season of Lent, each day you'll find an invitation to contemplate what God wants for you in this moment.

Today you are invited to pray this prayer of transformation.

I breathe in God's grace.

May it transform my insecurities

So that I breathe out God's love

I breathe in God's love

May it transform my fears

So that I breathe out God's hope

I breathe in God's hope

May it transform my doubts

So that I breathe out God's faithfulness

I breathe in God's faithfulness

May it transform my heart

So that I breathe out the Good News of Christ Jesus

I breathe in the Good News of Christ Jesus

May it transform me

So that I breathe out God's grace...