



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of August 16, 2026

Prayer for the Week

(Start by taking a deep, cleansing breath in and then slowly letting it out. Repeat a few times as needed.)

Gracious God, quiet my heart and open my mind as I spend this time with you. Help me listen for your voice, let go of the expectations that shape me, and remain open to what you are teaching me. May I grow as a disciple who learns, listens, and follows. Amen.

Monday, August 17

Scripture: Luke 10:38–42

While Jesus and his disciples were traveling, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his message. By contrast, Martha was preoccupied with getting everything ready for their meal. So Martha came to him and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the table all by myself? Tell her to help me."

The Lord answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won't be taken away from her."

Observation

We often read this story as a lesson about being too busy. But there is something more significant happening. Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet, the traditional posture of a disciple learning from a teacher. Luke intentionally presents Mary not simply as someone resting, but as someone learning.

That makes Jesus' response especially significant. In the first-century Jewish world, women generally did not have the same access to formal religious education as men. Yet Jesus does not tell Mary that she belongs somewhere else. He welcomes her as a learner.

Jesus also does not condemn Martha's hospitality. Her service is valuable. The problem is that her many responsibilities have become a source of anxiety and distraction. Jesus invites her to recognize that there is something even more important than meeting every expectation placed upon her.

Application

What roles have come to define you? Perhaps you are the dependable one, the caregiver, the worker, the volunteer, the person who always says yes. These roles may be good, but they are not your deepest identity. Jesus invites you to put discipleship first. Before asking, *"What do I need to accomplish today?"* ask, *"What is Jesus inviting me to learn today?"* Make a little space to sit at Jesus' feet, to read Scripture, pray, listen, or simply be still.

Prayer

Jesus, help me make room to listen before I rush to do. Amen.

Tuesday, August 18**Scripture: Mark 3:31–35**

His mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside and sent word to him, calling for him. A crowd was seated around him, and those sent to him said, "Look, your mother, brothers, and sisters are outside looking for you."

He replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Looking around at those seated around him in a circle, he said, "Look, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does God's will is my brother, sister, and mother."

Observation

Family was one of the most important sources of identity in the ancient world. A person's family determined much about their place in society, their responsibilities, their relationships, and their future. Jesus does not reject his biological family, but he expands the definition of belonging. His followers become a new kind of family, connected not primarily by ancestry but by their commitment to God's way.

This connects deeply with Mary and Martha. Martha could have been defined by her role as hostess and caretaker. Mary could have been defined simply as someone's sister. But Jesus sees them as more than their assigned roles. Jesus creates space for people to discover an identity rooted in discipleship.

Application

We all have roles that matter: parent, spouse, partner, friend, employee, volunteer, caregiver, leader, neighbor. But none of those roles completely define you.

Take a moment today to embrace this sentence: "Before I am anything else, I am a disciple of Jesus." Let that truth reshape how you see yourself. And remember, your worth does not depend on how useful you are to other people.

Prayer

Jesus, remind me that my deepest identity is found in you. Amen.

Wednesday, August 19

Scripture: Galatians 3:26–28

You are all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Observation

The categories Paul names were not insignificant. They represented some of the major social divisions of the ancient world: ethnicity, social status, and gender. Paul is not claiming that these differences cease to exist. Rather, he declares that they no longer determine a person's value or standing before God.

This helps us see Mary and Martha with new eyes. Mary's decision to sit at Jesus' feet was significant because she was taking the posture of a disciple. Jesus did not allow cultural expectations about who could learn from a rabbi to determine her place. The gospel continually challenges the boundaries we use to decide who belongs, who is capable, and who gets to participate.

Application

What assumptions have you inherited about who can lead, learn, teach, serve, or make a difference? Some expectations are so familiar that we rarely question them. Today, ask God to show you one assumption that may need to be reconsidered. Then look for someone whose gifts or calling you might have overlooked because of an expectation, stereotype, age, background, or role.

Prayer

God of grace, help me see people as you see them and make room for all who seek you. Amen.

Thursday, August 20

Scripture: Romans 12:1–2

So, brothers and sisters, because of God's mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate priestly service. Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.

Observation

Paul begins this section of Romans by appealing to God's mercy. The Christian life is not about earning God's love; it is a response to the grace God has already given.

Then Paul calls believers not to be conformed to the patterns of the world but to be transformed through renewed thinking. The word *conformed* suggests being shaped by an outside pattern. *Transformed* points toward an inner change that affects how we live. This is exactly what discipleship does. Jesus doesn't simply ask us to behave differently. Jesus teaches us to see differently.

The expectations surrounding Mary and Martha were part of the cultural world they inhabited. Jesus invited them to imagine a different possibility. Mary could be a learner. Martha could step away from the pressure to manage everything.

Application

Pay attention today to the voices that tell you who you are supposed to be. Ask:

- What am I doing because I truly believe God is calling me?
- What am I doing because I am afraid of disappointing someone?
- What expectations have I accepted without ever questioning them?

Now, invite God to renew your mind and help you distinguish between God's invitation and society's expectations.

Prayer

God, renew my mind so I can recognize your voice above every other voice. Amen.

Friday, August 21

Scripture: Philippians 3:12–16

It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus. So all of us who are spiritually mature should think this way, and if anyone thinks differently, God will reveal it to him or her. Only let's live in a way that is consistent with whatever level we have reached.

Observation

Paul was an experienced Christian leader when he wrote these words. Yet he openly admits that he has not arrived. He is still learning, still growing, and still pursuing Christ. That is an important picture of discipleship.

In our culture, we often celebrate expertise and completion. We want to have the answer, know what we're doing, and appear confident. But Christian maturity includes the humility to say, "I still have more to learn." The goal of discipleship is not to reach a point where we no longer need to learn; it is to remain open to what Christ is still teaching us.

Application

What is God teaching you right now? Perhaps it is patience. Forgiveness. Courage. Generosity. Trust. Compassion. The willingness to change your mind. Instead of seeing yourself as someone who should already have everything figured out, embrace the freedom of being a lifelong learner. Today, pray: "Jesus, what do you want to teach me?" Then pay attention.

Prayer

Jesus, keep my heart humble, curious, and willing to grow. Amen.

Saturday, August 22**Scripture: John 15:1–5**

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vineyard keeper. He removes any of my branches that don't produce fruit, and he trims any branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit. You are already trimmed because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. A branch can't produce fruit by itself, but must remain in the vine. Likewise, you can't produce fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything.

Observation

Jesus uses the image of a vine and branches to describe the relationship between himself and his followers. A branch cannot produce fruit by itself. It must remain connected to the vine. This gives us an important perspective on the Mary-and-Martha story.

The Christian life is not primarily about how much we accomplish for Jesus. It begins with remaining connected to Jesus. Martha was doing many things for Jesus, but she had become distracted and anxious. Mary was doing something much simpler: she was receiving from Jesus. Jesus does not call us to choose between a life of action and a life of listening. Rather, our action is meant to grow out of our relationship with him. We don't serve in order to become disciples. We serve because we are disciples.

Application

Before you begin your work today, pause. Before you answer the next email, start the next task, care for the next person, or solve the next problem, take a moment to reconnect with Christ. You might pray: "Jesus, help me remain in you as I move through this day."

Then go into this day to serve, not from anxiety or the need to prove yourself, but from the security of knowing who you are and whose you are.

Prayer

Jesus, help me remain connected to you so that my life may bear good fruit. Amen.