

RETURNING DEVOTIONAL

VINEYARD ANAHEIM



RETURNING TO A HEART OF PURITY

by Kathryn Scott

Psalm 24:

3 Who, then, ascends into the presence of the Lord?

And who has the privilege of entering into God's Holy Place?

4 Those who are clean—whose works and ways are pure,
whose hearts are true and sealed by the truth,
those who never deceive, whose words are sure.

5 They will receive the Lord's blessing
and righteousness given by the Savior-God.

6 They will stand before God,
for they seek the pleasure of God's face, the God of Jacob.

Worshippers who long to ascend into His presence are those who have given themselves to purity. They've actively prepared for His presence. They count it a privilege to enter His Holy place, and so they make sure their works and ways are pure.

They've determined to have their hearts sealed by the truth, and so they lean into the beauty of scripture, so they can offer a sacrifice to the Lord according to His ways rather than their own.

Theirs is not an offering formed by the opinions or preferences of man - theirs is an offering ordered by the Lord. They are covenant worshippers.

They've chosen purity in their speech, and integrity in their dealings with others. They refuse to deceive or dishonor, understanding that their words are part of their worship.

These are the worshippers who receive the blessing of the Lord, and the righteousness that comes from Him. These are the ones who get to stand before God - face to face, unbridled in their worship, unhindered in their devotion, alive in the fullest depth of communion with Him.

These are the worshippers we long to be.

Today, let's return to purity, to integrity, to truth. Let's actively and fearfully prepare our hearts to stand in His presence as His covenant people.

RETURNING TO A POSTURE OF PRAYER

by Katie Riddle

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” Ephesians 6:18, CSB

“Now he told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not give up. “There was a judge in a certain town who didn’t fear God or respect people. And a widow in that town kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’

“For a while he was unwilling, but later he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or respect people, yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice, so that she doesn’t wear me out by her persistent coming.’”

Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. Will not God grant justice to His elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay helping them? I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” Luke 18:1-8, CSB

It’s natural to become a praying people when disaster strikes and we’re slammed with the awareness of our dependency on the LORD. We instinctively turn to God and cry out for help, protection, justice, provision, and all the things we have little to no control over. As we currently find ourselves in a globally volatile hour, let’s allow the forward momentum this is providing to push us towards prayer. Let’s seize the opportunity to devote ourselves to prayer and to the pure word of God, just as the early church did. Let’s learn to be faithful, “praying in the spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

A prayerful posture is one that is alert, one whose mind is fixed on the things above, one whose thoughts are consumed with the LORD and what He is doing and saying. Yes, there is a conditioning, like pulling the string to a lawnmower until the engine fires up. This current season is like gasoline— it can either be used to fuel the engine of fear and anxiety or it can be used to fuel the reality of who God is and who we are in Him. If we choose to ignite ourselves with our God-given identity and purpose, we will naturally devote ourselves to prayer and to God-glorifying works that flow from a prayerful posture.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

RETURNING TO A POSTURE OF PRAYER

by Katie Riddle

Today is a wonderful time to take a good and honest look at our prayer lives and ask ourselves, do we have one? Are we praying without ceasing? Are we praying for His people? Leave shame at the door, it's useless. Remember that our Father loves us, and desires to meet us where we are in our prayer journey. He wants to lead us into the intimacy with Him found in a lifestyle of prayer. Don't waste time worrying about days when you hear or feel nothing during prayer. Remember He is so worthy of our time regardless of what we get from it. Indeed, isn't our time a beautiful offering, the most precious and finite resource to give the One who has given us everything?

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer times and to lead you into a lifestyle of prayer. Jesus tells us to "pray always and never give up." This is a sacred invitation that He helps us acquire, not an unreachable demand that sends us into a shame spiral of overwhelming inadequacy. Each and every day Jesus Himself intercedes for us (Romans 8:34). Let us here and now, determine in our hearts that we are a praying people and that Jesus will find faith on earth when He returns. Let's invite our children and those around us to join us in this wonderful lifestyle. As we pray, let us always ask the Father who loves us dearly, who is drawing us close to His heart, to lead the way as we give Him our faithful "yes."

Recommended books for a deeper dive:

- Revival Praying, by Leonard Ravenhill
- Prayer: Why Your Words to God Matter, by Corey Russel
- Draw a Circle: The 40-Day Prayer Challenge by Mark Batterson

RETURNING TO A LIFE OF FAITH

by Penny Fulton

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see...And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to God must believe that He is and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.” Heb. 11:1, 6

Jesus is new every day. Every time we watch for Him, each time we cry out to Him in our need or in our great thankfulness, He gives us a glimpse of such eternal blessing, immeasurable love, and mercy way beyond our own expectations or imagination. He causes Himself to be found by us. The depth of love, of His intrinsic care shows itself every time we seek Him.

Therefore, I find myself returning to faith over and over again. Jesus Christ is relentless in His patience and His love for us. To seek His face is an act of faith that we continually return to, because we are declaring to our own hearts that He is, and that He rewards us who seek Him, as Hebrews 11:6 declares.

Luke tells us about a widow who was relentless before an unjust judge, pleading for justice. She wouldn't give up, but kept after the judge with her requests, until he finally wore down. Jesus uses this story as an illustration not only of prayer but also of faith; for He says at the end, “...However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” So according to this illustration, faith is demonstrated when we won't give up but keep asking God for those things the Holy Spirit has put on our hearts and not give up.

Peter says that we need to supplement our faith with similar qualities so we could experience the life Jesus promised us. In essence, faith is a foundation/platform upon which you build a quality life (I Peter 1:3-11). It is a lifelong pursuit to which you return again and again that gives you an ever increasing life of godliness. It is a way to keep faith alive because this life tries to suck life from you continually.

Purposeful restoration of faith assures you that God is at work in you. You are not alone in this.

RETURNING TO COMPASSION

by Lambert Lo

“And He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with Him, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.” Matthew 26:37-38

In the moments before his betrayal and arrest, Jesus led his disciples to a garden outside the city. Gethsemane, also known as the oil press, would foretell the suffering Jesus would experience in His spirit, mind and body.

In our cities, both great and small, this is a time of pressing. Many could identify with Jesus' words, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death.”

Jesus graciously tells his three close friends (and to us) what compassion in that moment looks like, feels like and sounds like.

He simply asked his friends to stay close and pray. To pray with Him, not at Him. To remain near, when our tendencies shout to get up and fix the situation.

Jesus reveals how to have compassion with those who are hurting. Sometimes the best things we can do for those who suffer is to be present and pray. Compassion seeks to love people not fix people. At times we can become anxious when we try to answer questions nobody is asking.

The God of Compassion is both in you and upon you this pressing hour. He is leading you to your own Gethsemane in your neighborhood, workplace and schools. The Spirit is showing you how to see with His eyes and notice hurting people. When words are neither enough or appropriate, His compassion will convey through gentleness.

The invitation of Jesus from the garden is for a return to compassion. To “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15) Jesus' words show us the best example on how to counsel a suffering friend, “Stay here and watch with me.”