

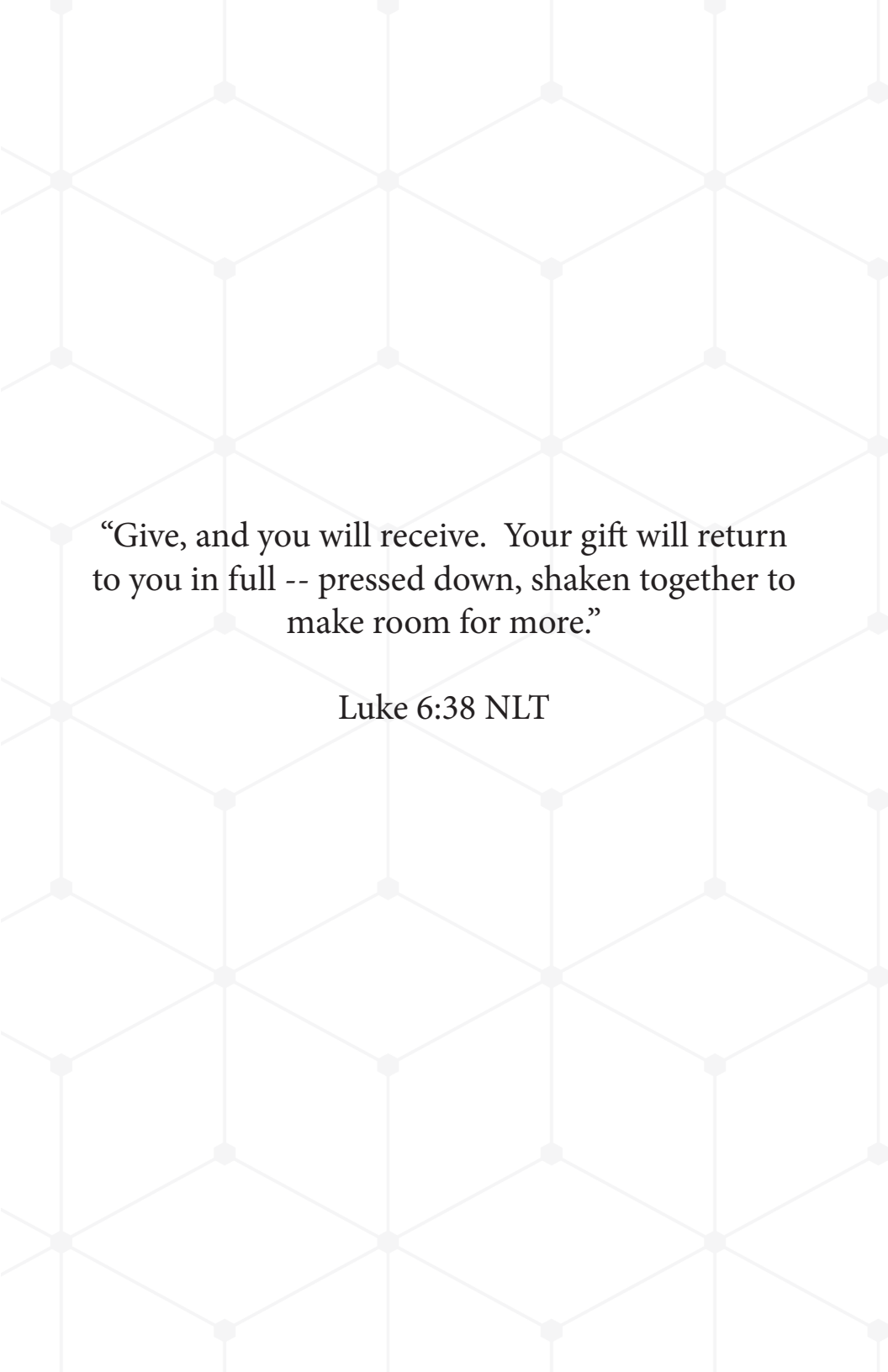
Faith Church Prayer Devotional



MAKING ROOM

FOR FAITH • FOR FAMILIES • FOR 508

Let us join together in prayer for our
church building and relocation project.



“Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return
to you in full -- pressed down, shaken together to
make room for more.”

Luke 6:38 NLT

A Note from the Prayer Team

Hey there Faith Church Family!

We're excited to go on this Making Room journey with you! As part of that journey, we were asked to put together a series of devotionals that would help us focus on God's work for us each day for the next 28 days.

Our hope is that each of us will hear from God and grow in our trust of Him throughout this journey. We've focused our daily readings around a different theme each week: praise, confession, asking and trusting. You'll find a little intro to each theme at the beginning of the week. Each day you'll read a passage of scripture and think about one idea connected to that overall theme. We invite you to read a deeper application thought and answer a brief question to help you digest the idea even more. Finally, we've written out a prayer to close out each day. This is meant to be a starting place and you can certainly pray more than our written prayer here.

Since we are journeying as a family of faith, it was important to use to preserve the overall flavor of ordinary people following an extraordinary God. Sometimes we'll speak individually and sometimes collectively. There may be a typo or two in here — but we're ok with that. We hope you'll be blessed deeply by your time spent in God's word and presence. Thank you so much for coming along with us!

Please continue to join us in praying for God's presence and provision throughout the entire Making Room journey.

We love you in Christ!

Making Room Prayer Team

What is Praise?

Week 1

Praise, according to the definition in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is: to say or write good things about (someone or something); to express approval of (someone or something); to express thanks to or love and respect for (God). When we reflect on all the things that we can think of that God has planned, created, orchestrated, promised, and fulfilled we stand in awe. Add to that how He keeps the whole Earth spinning at just the right speed, at just the right distance from the sun, and we're overwhelmed. We want to give thanks. We want to respond with praise. Jesus died so that we can live in eternity with Him – what does He see in us that He loves us so much? He chooses to hear all our prayers and he knows our deepest thoughts and needs and He doesn't have to. That kind of generosity invites a response. There is not enough space in this devotional to cover all the reasons God is so deserving of our thanks and praise. But we hope this first week will be a good place for you to dive a little deeper into it. To see a beautiful illustration of this, read Psalm 145.

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell all of his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

Psalms 105:1-4

Week 1 - DAY: 1

Application:

The Lord's Prayer is not only the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples (and us) to pray, but it is also a great format to follow for deeper, more specific prayer. Jesus began with, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Acknowledging God, our heavenly Father, as holy encourages us to begin our prayer with holy reverence, fear, and gratitude for who he is and all he has done.

Question:

What has God done in my life, in the lives of my family and friends, and in our church family that I should thank and praise him for? What could I specifically share with others to bring glory to his name and bring others into a closer walk with Jesus?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you created all things and yet love us unconditionally. I thank you for the many marvelous deeds and blessings that you have done in my life and in the life of your church. Thank you for all you will do in the future. As we begin to consider this building project, may we seek your face as a church family. We desire that your perfect will be accomplished in us and through us individually and as a church — for the sake of your glory and the community around us in the 508. In the precious name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.

-Insert Name here...

Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Revelation 15:3b-4

Week 1 - DAY: 2

Application:

God keeps his promises and his Word is true. When he says he is coming soon, even though his soon doesn't always match what we might think of as "soon," the fact is that he is coming back. He is coming back to receive his bride, the body of Christ. He is coming back to judge and to see what we've been doing with our time here. When we focus on eternity instead of the here and now, our priorities change. God wants us to live on this planet in a way that our lifestyle points others to Christ.

Question:

Does my heart get excited as I look forward to the day that the Lord Jesus Christ comes for his church and leads us into eternity with him and the believers from all ages? Do I have certain people that I pray for and hope to see there? Who else might God be placing in my heart to pray for?

Prayer:

Father God, I thank you and praise you for loving us so much that you had a master plan that would bring all who trusted in you into eternity with you. Lord, help me be a witness to my family, friends, coworkers, classmates, and anyone else you send my way so that they, too, will be counted among the faithful followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you that there's more to look forward to than just what I can see right now. Thank you that you are making all things new. It's in your name, Jesus, that I pray, Amen.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

Hebrews 13:15

Week 1 - DAY: 3

Application:

There are times when God did not come through the way we thought He would. The medical test comes back positive. The spouse wants a divorce. A child is wayward. The mortgage company calls in the loan. God seems very far away, and praise is the last thing to bubble up from our hearts. We can't see His goodness, and circumstances scream that He has forgotten us. To praise God in those times requires personal sacrifice. It takes an act of the will to lay it all on the altar before a God we don't understand. When we bring a "sacrifice of praise," we choose to believe that, even though life is not going as we think it should, God is still good and can be trusted.

Question:

How can we best pray for the process set before us? What are some storms that might be challenging to weather? How can I ask God for help for me and others as we navigate this building campaign? How is God inviting us to look on Jesus anew in this process?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we come humbly before you praising your Holy Name, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit because we know this is not always going to feel easy. Lord, help us in the times when we don't agree and when we don't understand. Flood us with your love to see beyond the waves of fear and disagreement. Let the sacrifice of love rule our hearts — both as we enter this project and in the months and years to come. Help us to enter into a deeper understanding and practice of praise through this journey with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In the future your children will ask you, 'What is the meaning of these laws, decrees, and regulations that the Lord our God has commanded us to obey?' 'Then you must tell them, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand. The Lord did miraculous signs and wonders before our eyes, dealing terrifying blows against Egypt and Pharaoh and all his people. He brought us out of Egypt so he could give us this land he had sworn to give our ancestors.'"

Deuteronomy 6:20-23 NLT

Week 1 - DAY: 4

Application:

A key aspect of praise is looking back at what God has done. Looking back reminds us of who God is and wells up in us a confidence that God is the same today as He was then. In this way reflection and praise readies our hearts to face challenges because it takes our eyes off of the problems and giants we see and fixes them on the goodness and faithfulness of God.

Question:

What is one thing God has rescued you from? Or one thing He's given you that He promised He would? Can you imagine yourself telling future generations (your kids, grandkids, nieces and nephews, friends' kids, etc.) about that?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, a big part of praise is looking back at what you have done, at how you have shown yourself to be faithful through past challenges. Thank you, Lord, for being so faithful to me and to your church. You have done so much that I'm not even aware of — and you are doing so much now that I don't yet know. As I look back over my life and over the life of this particular church, please grow in me a deep confidence in you — in who you are and in what you're like. That you are a faithful God who never leaves his people. And that I can trust you with what you're asking of me. Help me, please, to see the wonders you're doing before my eyes and how you're bringing your people out of Egypt so that I can one day tell about all that you have done. I ask this in your name, Lord, Amen.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:16-19

Week 1 - DAY: 5

Application:

God is about so much more than accomplish a task or finished a project. More often than not, the externals that we see point to something deeper that God wants to accomplish in us and through us for others. God is always about people — and specifically about transforming ordinary people into people marked deeply by His love and presence. Did you ever think about the connection between challenge and transformation? Could it be that God longs for us to “know this love that surpasses knowledge” that Christ may dwell even more richly in our hearts through faith and that this is how He wants to accomplish that?

Question:

What is it about Paul's prayer encourages me today? How might God want to do what's described here in my community and the people around me? What could that look like?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, would you please strengthen the people of Faith Church for the journey we have ahead of us. I pray that all of us — from the smallest toddler to the oldest member — would be rooted and established in your love through this journey that we may have power together with all your people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is for us and for those around us that don't yet know you. Please, would you ready us for the road ahead — both in what we know we have to do but also in what we don't yet know. And throughout this whole process, Lord, please would you fill us and those you will join with us to your full measure that we may make much of you all the days of our lives. In your precious name, Amen.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 1:3-7

Week 1 - DAY: 6

Application:

How interesting that Peter rejoices even at “all kinds of trials.” Why? Peter understands that God is doing something in the trials that’s really valuable. Something that couldn’t happen if life were always easy. This something is so valuable that he shouts for joy. And so he thanks God and encourages them to look beyond just what they can see to what is being produced in the future. Because of Jesus our hope doesn’t depend on circumstances going our way. It’s secure no matter what. That’s an awesome reason to praise!

Question:

What hope stirs up in me as I read this passage? What is quieted down as I think on what God is promising me here?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you that our hope is a living hope because you are alive! Thank you for purchasing for us a hope and an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. And even now as we put our shoulders to the work that you have given us on this earth, please help us to do that work knowing that we are shielded by your power. Help us to do this work with much joy and rejoicing, knowing that you are at work in us to produce something that’s far more valuable than gold. Help us to give ourselves to you and to trust you as we enter into this building project. Help us to open ourselves up to you in the work you want to do in us and through us for others, so that you would receive much praise and glory and honor — not just from us but from countless others we may not meet until you are revealed. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his ; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalms 100:1-5

Week 1 - DAY: 7

Application:

The Psalmist prophesies that God will receive so much praise that the whole earth will shout for joy. His goodness will be seen and the whole world will respond in glad hearted worship. And what's the source of this worship, joy and praise? Have a look at the last line. It's because God's love endures forever and that his faithfulness continues throughout ALL generations. So, we shouldn't grow weary in praising Him because his mercies toward us last forever.

Question:

There are times when we shout for joy because one of our family members accomplished a milestone. Or our favorite team has won the championship, we praise them for their accomplishments, we spread the word of how wonderful they are. Can we honestly say we have that same passion when it comes to praising our Lord for all he has done and is doing in our lives? Do we have this same joy, praise, dedication and anticipation for what God is about to do in our midst?

Prayer:

Father God, help us to anticipate and believe you with the same passion we have for earthly accomplishments and apply it to our daily lives as we move through the building process. Help us in our weakness to shout for joy even when we don't feel joyful. Teach us Lord to look to scripture for the strength needed to stay in step with you regardless of the circumstances. Help us to put our hope in the fact that you ARE good and that your love endures forever — both for us and for those that will come after us. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen

done in my life and in the life of your church. Thank you for all you will do in the future. As we begin to consider this building project, may we seek your face as a church family. We desire that your perfect will be accomplished in us

What is Confession?

Week 2

It's easy to be intimidated by the word "confession." Many of us have bad mental pictures about what confession involves: that it's some sort of mandatory public sharing of our dirty laundry or something that God wants to use to make sure we know just how much shame we should carry around.

But, that's actually not what biblical confession is at all. In scripture, confession isn't something for the "especially bad people." It's something that God invites all of His people into throughout their whole lives. Biblical confession is simply agreeing with God. It's saying "You're right, God." It's a swapping out of our vision or perspective for God's. It's agreeing and asking for help: "You're right about our sins and our mixed motives. You're right about how much I need You. Would You step in and rewrite this story?" In fact, if we look throughout scripture we see that oftentimes confession or being honest with God is the first step to seeing God do what only He can do. It's almost as if He wants us to be reminded that there's no way we could do this on our own. It's how we invite God's presence and power in both our lives and our world.

So as we go through the readings and reflections for this week, don't be afraid. Instead, welcome confession as a gift — as a way of being reminded and as a way of discovering God's deep love for you. Because when we come to God honestly and ask for His healing and forgiveness, He always, always, always answers with His resounding yes.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

2 Chronicles 7:14-15

Week 2 - DAY: 1

Application:

This scripture is one many of us have heard before. In it God makes it clear that the relationship he shares with His people was never meant to be one sided. It begins with “if.” “If” is an invitation word. God spoke this to the Israelites after Solomon dedicated the temple to God. It was only after the temple was finished that his glory filled the temple. (Check out verses 1-13), not before he made the temple his dwelling place. Additionally, God called them into a deeper relationship with Him even after the project was finished. He wanted them to keep pursuing Him when they were “all done” with their work. He had a bigger mission for them: to be humble, pray, seek his face, and turn from their sins. Only then will he work on their behalf. This stands true for us as well.

Question:

As we enter into a building project for a new house of God, how can we both individually and as a church family prepare our hearts for this journey? In what ways might the Lord be leading me to humbly turn from my sins and seek His face? How might He be longing to heal “the land” around me and us here in Auburn and central Mass? Both in our community now and into the future?

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for the gift of confession. I love that you long to hear from us and that you desire to forgive our sin and heal our land. I humbly come before you and ask that you reveal areas in my life that need to be turned over completely to you. I don’t want anything to stand in the way of my prayers. Please would You prod me to seek you daily for guidance and provision in my life and in the larger life of Faith Church. In Jesus name, Amen.

So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty." Then the word of the Lord came to me: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you."

Zechariah 4:6, 8-9

Week 2 - DAY: 2

Application:

There are times in our lives when we feel weak, powerless inadequate and sinful. And we should — the obstacles we face are huge. Zerubbabel, a leader of the Jews who returned from captivity faced some incredible obstacles. But, God told him not to rely on his own power but to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. We are also being asked to be teachable and look to rely on God's spiritual power, not human power. These scriptures also remind us that obstacles will be removed and paths opened when we rely on God's power.

Question:

How have I clung to my own sense of strength, intelligence or power in the past? What might I have missed out on by not relinquishing control to God in challenging or impossible situations?

Prayer:

Dear Lord, so many times in our lives we have relied on our own power, our own knowledge or our own provision. We may have said no to something you asked of us because we felt inadequate, selfish or just plain lazy. Help us Lord to confess these selfish feelings, our sense of inadequacy or excuses. And instead, Lord, help us willingly give up our power and control to you so that you can do something greater than we could ever do. Help us to listen to your powerful word — "Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit." In Jesus name, Amen.

the precious name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Psalms 51:1-2, 10-12

Week 2 - DAY: 3

Application:

A key aspect of spiritual growth and healing is asking God to do in us what we cannot do ourselves. God alone can blot out our transgressions (ways that we've missed His desired goal for us) and cleanse us from our sins. We can't do that. But He can! And the really good news is that He wants to. As we see from this passage, God longs to bring the joy of salvation into our hearts and to give us a spirit that renews us right here and now. That's crazy! That we don't have to "gear up" for God to do His work. But because of Jesus, God willingly offers to do this work in us whenever and however we need it. All we have to do is ask.

Question:

Is there anything that I think that God cannot forgive me for, in my past or now? If so, how is He inviting me to trust that to Him? Where is He wanting to renew a right spirit in me? Do I fully accept the total forgiveness from God that was made available to me on the cross by Jesus' willing sacrifice?

Prayer:

Lord God, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the sacrifice that you made when you sent your one and only Son to die for me on the cross. Thank you that the price Jesus paid out of his great love for me cancelled the debt I owe, and that you now count me among the righteous of God. I rejoice in you that I have full access to your presence — day and night! There's no end to your steadfast love and abundant mercy! Help me to live out of your love for me. Please help me to offer myself, my gifts and my life to you, not out of a desire to earn your love but as a heartfelt response to your love for me and others. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Psalms 139:7-12

Week 2 - DAY: 4

Application:

The Israelites left Egypt (a place they knew) for the wilderness (a place they didn't know and a place that felt dangerous in its exposure and uncertainty). But, God had bigger plans for the Israelites. He wanted them to spend sometime in the wilderness before they got to the "land flowing with milk and honey" so that they would learn first hand what their God was like. He wanted them to have a closeness with Him that they experienced first-hand and not through the grapevine of what other people said.

Question:

Have I ever been in a place where I wasn't sure if God would be with me— a wilderness where I felt alone and exposed? How does this psalm speak to me about my fear and apprehension? How might God be wanting to meet us in the wilderness as we prepare to leave what is comfortable for what is unknown?

Prayer:

Lord, you promise never to leave us or forsake us (see Hebrews 13:5). Thank you that you know us and our fears so well. And, thank you, Lord, for not being afraid of the things that frighten us. Would you take the things that are dark to us and make them shine like the day? Would you help us to know you better because of this experience? Please join us together as a spiritual family through this process and mold us more into the people you would have us be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

'This is what the Lord has declared: Are you the one to build a house for me to live in? ...I have never once complained to Israel's tribal leaders, the shepherds of my people Israel. I have never asked them, "Why haven't you built me a beautiful house?" ... Now I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth! And I will provide a homeland for my people Israel, planting them in a secure place where they will never be disturbed....Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.'

2 Samuel 7:1-16

Week 2 - DAY: 5

Application:

David loved God. He looked around his life and realized that He was living really well. He looked at God's tent and wanted to build Him something more permanent — David wanted to build God a house, a beautiful temple. But God answers David's desire with an even more grand vision — instead of building an extravagant house for Himself, God wants to build a people. He doesn't want a place to live. He wants a people that know Him and are changed by Him. That's so much more than just a building!

Question:

How is God's vision for what He wants to build inspiring to you? What might He want to build in your life or in the life of the church? How might that be different than what you first anticipated?

Prayer:

Lord, I confess that I have had a small vision of you and of what you want to do in and through my life. Please help me to be open to you in whatever you want to build in the future — both in my life and in the life of your church. This story of David reminds me of your heart, God. You desire people more than you want buildings. Please continue to call a people to yourself here in Auburn, in Worcester, and around the world. Please give me new eyes to see what you are doing and what you might be inviting me to join you in. I want to see people come to know you in a way that brings them life and wholeness. As we continue to think and to pray about Making Room, please help me to see that you're building so much more than a building. Help me to see that you are making room for more of your people. In Jesus' name, Amen.

-Insert Name here...

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:20-24

Week 2 - DAY: 6

Application:

Change can feel weird. Different. Uncomfortable at first. And yet, there is so much life waiting for us in change. The blueprint of following Jesus is all about change — all about moving from what we're used to to a new and different life. In many ways, Making Room is a chance for us to see the work God wants to do in individual lives on a much bigger screen. As we give ourselves to His plan as a family, joining each other in taking off our old selves and putting on the new self in Jesus, we too can be created a new. Can you imagine what that would be like?

Question:

How is God nudging me to put off my former self? What is one area or way He is inviting me to put on this new self of righteousness and holiness in Jesus?

Prayer:

Lord, we recognize that you are calling us to a new life in Jesus, a life that doesn't look anything like the life we lived before. This can feel scary or weird at first. Please would you forgive us for the ways we sometimes cling to our former way of life and for the ways that we don't trust you. Show us how empty it really is. And in your mercy, lead us into the new life of your Son, Jesus. Jesus, we thank you that you don't just want to save us but renew and remake us. Thank you that you have "created us to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" that we might be a blessing to this world. Help us to step willingly and eagerly with you into that new kind of life for ourselves and others. In Jesus name, Amen.

Then Moses said, “If you don’t personally go with us, don’t make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you look favorably on me – on me and on your people – if you don’t go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth.” The Lord replied to Moses, “I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you, and I know you by name.”

Exodus 33:15-17 NLT

Week 2 - DAY: 7

Application:

Moses had the wisdom to know that the people of Israel needed God to go with them into the Promised Land. Without God’s presence, provision, and protection, even if they did “accomplish the goal” he knew they would be destroyed by the nations occupying the land and God’s name and glory would be dishonored. We also need to confess to God that we need his presence wherever we go. Any skill or knowledge that we have is from him. When we try to do things on our own, we often mess things up and fail. No matter how smart or qualified we think we are, it is important to invite God to guide us according to his will for our individual lives and for the future “promised land” for Faith Church.

Question:

Am I willing to confess and hand over to God the areas where I feel inadequate and allow him to provide me with the ability to accomplish whatever he would have me do?

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, I come before you now and confess that I don’t know what is best for the future of Faith Church, but you do. I ask that you guide the leadership and give them the discernment to know your will. Open doors where they need to be opened, and close the doors that you do not want us to open. Wherever Faith Church is planted, I pray and ask that your presence goes with us and that your Holy Spirit will fill the buildings and property so that you may you may be glorified through the work you give your people to do. May we be known as a people of love, grace, hospitality, and generosity. In the precious name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Why Ask?

Week 3

God delights in our coming to Him. He knows what we need before we before we do, but He also longs to have us ask. This isn't something new, but rather something God's people have been doing for generations. When we seek God's guidance and direction, as we are for this project, we can look back to those who came before us — both those who have gone before us in Scripture and those who have gone before us here in the 508. The original 17 people who started this church spent many nights in prayer seeking the Lord's will: asking for His guidance, wisdom and leading. God answered their prayers and provided this land to build His church. Let's continue to ask God to provide the direction that will fulfill His will for Faith Church for us now and for generations into the future.

The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1: 1-4

Week 3 - DAY: 1

Application:

God is preparing Faith Church for a journey that will require great trust, reliance and courage. Like Nehemiah, we need to be continually asking for God's guidance. Nehemiah spent many days asking God what he should do personally about the fact that his brothers and sisters in Israel were in trouble and great distress. God answered him when he persisted in his asking. And God invites us to ask — not just once but to keep asking Him for what we need.

Question:

Note Nehemiah's concern for the Jewish people in the land who had survived the exile. Are we as a church body concerned for the exiles among us? What do they look like? How is God inviting you to see them today? How is He nudging you to notice the broken and those in great trouble around you — both in your life and in our community?

Prayer:

Dear Lord, we come to you asking that you quicken us to prayer. Lord we trust you for wisdom and we seek your guidance in the areas you have already prepared for us to serve in. Help us, Lord, to not be afraid of the unknown, but to be a people who see the exiles among us and move us to move on their behalf. Help us, Lord, to rely on the Holy Spirit's power to guide and direct our eyes to the plight of others and the courage to help rebuild their lives. For you, O Lord, are a God of love, provision and restoration. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Then I said: "Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'" Nehemiah 1:5-9

Week 3 - DAY: 2

Application:

Here we start to see what Nehemiah's prayers looked like. He begins to ask God for direction, wisdom and clarity through prayer. He praises God, confesses his sins and the sins of his people. He reminds God of His history with His people, that they are His servants, His people whom He redeemed by His great strength and His mighty hand. Nehemiah knows that he is just a link in the chain of God's work throughout history. This gives him strength to ask for things not just for himself but for those in the future. We too are just a link in a long chain of God's plan to renew the world. So, even though we are slowly being squeezed out of our comfort zone here at Faith, let's let it move us to pray not just for ourselves but for those in the future with great boldness and expectation.

Question:

How can I best follow Nehemiah's model of prayer, fasting, listening and asking in my daily life?

Prayer:

Dear Lord, we rejoice in the journey you are about to take us on. We look forward to the miracles we will experience as we like Nehemiah pray and praise you. We ask that you hear our prayers and through the power of the Holy Spirit magnify and multiply them. Help us remember the miraculous journey we have already experienced here at FAITH and in our personal lives. Bless your Holy Name, you are the Lord God of the impossible. In Jesus' name, Amen.

"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

Nehemiah 1:10-11

Week 3 - DAY: 3

Application:

In prayer, Nehemiah asked God to listen to his request for protection and success as he goes before a pagan king he is about to ask for a great favor. This is important because during Nehemiah's time you could be killed for showing a downcast face to the king. Nehemiah is taking a great risk in telling the king about his homeland and asking for his financial assistance in the rebuilding project. To prepare for that tremendous risk, he goes to God first and asks for His protection and provision even before he asks the powerful earthy king's. Nehemiah reminds God of how he redeemed his people. This is a great model for us to follow in our personal prayer times. Prayer requires stillness, waiting on His presence. It requires listening before asking, this takes Holy Spirit empowerment because we are a busy, noisy people.

Question:

Can you recall the times in your life when you experienced His presence? What did that look like, and how did it feel? What might you have to push thru to find that place of intimacy with God again?

Prayer:

Lord, we are the people of Faith Church positioned between the gates (or car dealerships) for such a time as this. Quiet us, Lord, help us to listen and wait upon your presence. Protect us from the busyness of daily life and fill us with Holy Spirit prayer power. Lord give us the courage and strength to stand firm believing and trusting You for provision. Like Nehemiah help us to pray Scripture back to you especially in those times when we feel overwhelmed and don't know how or what to pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Matthew 9:35-38

Week 3 - DAY: 4

Application:

What might some of those harvest workers look like today? What kind of “workers” does God’s kingdom project need right now? Here’s some to think about: children’s workers, teen mentors, small group leaders, deacons, trustees, overseers, finance management, and missionaries. The kingdom God wants to build needs all kinds of folks if it’s to be what He desires. The harvest is ready — both globally and in our backyard. Let’s ask God for laborers to join Him in His work.

Question:

What does that look like today? Where do I see a need for more workers for the harvest? Could it be that God has far more for us to participate in than we realize right now? What opportunities are there for me to join in the harvest right now?

Prayer:

Lord of the Harvest, we come to you as a body and ask you to fill our hearts with a passion to reach those you have called us to reach. We seek your will for each one of us to be obedient to your call and challenge us to step forward and serve in the areas of ministry that you have gifted us. Help us to see what you see. Show us that the fields are which and ready to be harvested. Show us that you have good work for us to do right now and help us to offer ourselves to you for that work — whatever it may look like. Please raise up more workers for the work of your kingdom — both here in #508 and around the world. Raise up teachers and proclaimers of your gospel, build up healers and those with great compassion. Call those who, like you, are good shepherds who care for your sheep. We as your body seek to reach more of the harvest wherever you lead us from here. Help us to follow you. In Jesus’ name, Amen

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:6-8

Week 3 - DAY: 5

Application:

It can be challenging at times, as we seek the Lord's answer to our inquiry. Sometimes He answers a question we didn't even ask. Other times He responds in a different way or provides an answer that is different or potentially more challenging than what we expected. This is when we need to really stay in tune and in focus on how He is responding, fully realizing this is His plan and not ours.

Question:

In this scripture, the disciples were seeking to get an answer to a question that seemed important to them, but Jesus gave them an answer they were not expecting. When we ask God to guide us through this challenging expansion of His Kingdom, will we be open to receive His answer, even if it's different than what we might expect?

Prayer:

Lord, be with us and in us throughout this process we pray. Help us to see your plan and how we are to respond to your calling for this body in the power of your Holy Spirit. Lord, we ask you to build your kingdom here — in us and in people we don't yet know. This is your project, Lord, not ours. We ask you, as our spiritual ancestors did long ago, to restore your kingdom here on the earth that we all might know you more. In Jesus' name, Amen.

But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Matthew 6:6-8

Week 3 - DAY: 6

Application:

Looking at this scripture, Jesus is being very specific about something that all of us need to hear. I'm not sure what your experience has been, but I can think of times when I seem to be babbling and very repetitious, especially when I am seeking to have an answer to something that is really bothering me. But God doesn't listen any more attentively to me because I use fancy words or rambling phrases. Instead, He knows what we need before we even ask Him for an answer. Let that truth comfort you whenever you have questions or anxious thoughts — either individually and collectively through this lengthy process. He already has the answers we really need. Our job is to spend time on our knees individually and collectively praying to seek His will.

Question:

Are we prepared to spend quality time with the Lord in prayer? What about the above passage gives you peace about seeking God over and over?

Prayer:

Lord, please bring us the faith and understanding we need to continually trust in your leading, wherever and whenever your plan comes to us. Give us the courage to follow and not lead, fully trusting in your wisdom to all that you bring before us. You have the answers and we need your Holy Spirit to guide us. In Jesus name, Amen.

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

1 John 5:14-15

Week 3 - DAY: 7

Application:

In today's scripture we get further confidence in knowing that our prayers will be answered, with one very important point that we need to humbly accept. That we need to be seeking His will for all that we bring before Him. I'm not sure what your experience has been, but I can honestly say I have gone ahead with my own plans without asking if they were God's plans or not. We can do that, but in my experience it can be very painful and a poor witness. On the other hand we can experience the joy of the Lord, knowing we are following His lead. Let's continually seek His presence and will in all we do.

Question:

Here is the challenge, as I see it — both for this current project and for our lives. Will we be able to accept the plan that He will provide and trust that it's good— that it's exactly what we need? Or will we insist on having our own way?

Prayer:

Lord, we do seek your will and we want to be a tremendous example of how trusting you is worth it. We want to see your kingdom come here in Auburn, in Worcester County and around the world. and reach those you have called us to reach. As we Make Room to see more of your work in the 508 region and beyond, help us to stay committed to you and to one another, loving and leading people into your kingdom that has no end. Lord, you have blessed us so much already and have walked with us through so many trials and challenges, as we have tried to be faithful in serving you. Growing forward from here Lord, please make your plan clear for our future and provide us the strength and wisdom to follow you wherever you lead. In Jesus name, Amen and Amen.

How do we grow in trust?

Week 4

Trust is vital in any relationship. Trust and faith go hand in hand. If you don't have faith in someone, you won't trust them with things that are important to you. Our salvation and where we spend eternity depend on whether or not we have put our faith and trust in God through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:6 says, "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." As we journey through life, God invites us to trust every nook and cranny to Him — giving Him more and more access into every relationship, area and decision we make. He wants our trust in Him to grow. As we open our hands and our hearts to Him, He increases our faith and allows us to be a light shining in the darkness.

It is going to take immense trust in God and in one another on this journey to our promised land — more than we likely have right now. But that's the beautiful thing about trust — it can grow! It doesn't matter what it is (big or small) God longs to show us that He is worthy of our trust. But, the only way He can do that is if we actually entrust things we care about to Him.

Enjoy the journey into trusting this week!

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."

Luke 16:10

Week 4 - DAY: 1

Application:

In this verse we are reminded of the importance of fidelity or trust. One commentary states that "We ought to take heed that we do not abuse our earthly work and duty and so be deprived of heavenly gifts: for how can they properly use spiritual gifts who abuse worldly things"? In other words, what we do with what we've been given here matters! God doesn't want robots. He wants partners, co-creators in this restoration project that He can trust — partners that share in both the risk and reward. God wants us to trust Him with what we have. But He also wants to know that we are worthy of His trust.

Question:

How best can we prepare ourselves to be a vital, trusted partner in the days that lay ahead of us? Who and what will we put our trust in?

Prayer:

Father God, it is easy for us to say we trust you and one another, the words can easily roll off our tongue. But, we might rarely think about whether or not we're worthy of your trust. Help us to be a people that are trustworthy in word and deed. Help our yes to be yes and our no to be no. Help us to trust you even when circumstances tempt us to believe otherwise. We can trust you with what you ask of us. Please grow our trust in you through this process. And Lord God by the power of your Holy Spirit, breathe divine trust in one another into our souls through diligent prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

-Insert Name here...

Now to him (God) who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Ephesians 3:20

Week 4 - DAY: 2

Application:

God created everything we see and know out of nothing. God spoke, and it was. God can provide anything and everything we need. He even knows before we ask. He is just patiently waiting for us to ask and pray for his guidance and provision.

Question:

Do I believe that God is fully able to provide for me all that I need in my life to accomplish his will? What about the church? As I think about who God is, his power and character, how does that help me think about this building project? How is He inviting me to believe that He will provide for us as a church no matter where He leads us?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, help me not to be overwhelmed by the immensity of our church relocation project. I put my whole heart and mind into your hands and look forward to seeing what amazing things you will do. Please grow my trust in you and in what you desire to do — both in my individual life and in the life of your church. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Week 4 - DAY: 3

Application:

In the world that we live in and the way many of us have been raised to rely on ourselves. This is New England! Self-reliance is our motto! So, this scripture offers a real challenge. Our way is often not God's way and He wants us to unlearn it. When making decisions we are usually told to have a good handle on our understanding of things, and the consequences that may come about as a result. Here we are called on, not to depend on our own logic, but to trust in the Lord, recognizing that He will determine the correct path to follow. This can only happen if He remains in the center of our lives and not out on the periphery.

Question:

What, if anything, even if it doesn't make sense to me, is in the way of putting my trust wholeheartedly into God's hands? What reservations do I have? Where is it challenging for me to acknowledge His presence and goodness? How might He want to meet me in that?

Prayer:

Lord God, I acknowledge that I don't know everything. But sometimes I act like I do — trusting my read of things over yours. As we go through this process, please help me not to lean on my own understanding or even my own feelings. I long to know you in a deeper way. Would you meet me and the whole church in this building project in powerful and personal ways? As we put our trust in you and learn to put more and more of our trust in you, would you make our paths straight? We ask this for your glory, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them – the Lord, who remains faithful forever.

Psalms 146:1-6

Week 4 - DAY: 4

Application:

Psalms 146 warns us not to put our hope and ultimate trust in other people. We are imperfect people who can let each other down. Our lives can change in an instant. Our knowledge and wisdom to not even come close to God's. We are all going to die some day along with all our hopes and dreams, and there won't be a U-haul following us into eternity. God, on the other hand, is praised because His Spirit doesn't depart, His plans don't fail and His wisdom doesn't fade. All through the Bible God encourages us to trust in him and him alone for he is faithful.

Question:

Are there any distractions in this crazy world that we live in that draw my attention and devotion away from praising, hoping, and trusting God in all areas of my life? What about them entices me? How might He be more worthy of my trust than they are?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I thank you and praise you as you are called by many names that declare your character. For you are Elohim (the Creator), El Elyon (The God Most High), El Shaddai (The All-sufficient One), Jehovah-Tsidkenku (The Lord our Righteousness), Jehovah-Shalom (The Lord is Peace), Jehovah-Jireh (The Lord will Provide). You are so much more beautiful and worthy of my praise than other things that vie for my time and attention. When I find myself distracted please help me to meditate on your Word, your love, and your unfailing character, as I come to know you more and seek you above all else. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4

Week 4 - DAY: 5

Application:

Have you ever thought of steadfastness as something that needs time to mature? That it could take time to have it's full intended effect? Take a minute to think about some of the difficult times you have had to face. I believe if we look at the results of some of those situations we will see that it is in those times that we have experienced real growth, and have come out the other side much stronger. Now add into the mix that the God of all comfort, who is at work in them, is bent on forming us into the image of His Son and trials take on a whole new dimension. If we knew that trial and challenge were the only ways to be made perfect, would we look at them in a different light? Would we even get to a place where we rejoice in them?

Question:

When trials come my way, and they do, how do I tend to see those situations and circumstances? Where might Jesus be in the midst of those places? How might these challenges be an opportunity to experience Jesus' joy, knowing that our Lord uses them to strengthen us?

Prayer:

Lord, help us to see your presence in the difficulties and trials we face. Help us as a congregation to notice and recognize your steadfastness with us through it all. As we reflect on this, help us — both individually and collectively — to count it joy as we journey with you. Please grow our faith in your steadfastness so that we might be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. In Jesus's name and for your glory, Amen.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

Week 4 - DAY: 6

Application:

Have you ever thought of steadfastness as needing time to mature? That it could take time to have it's full effect? We as a body are going to face numerous challenges as we go forward and work together. God is inviting us to trust Him as He leads us — as we seek Him moment by moment and decision by decision. He invites us to rejoice that we get to do this as a community and to receive His peace as we come to Him with our requests moment by moment. Let's look to Him to guard our hearts and minds as we go forward.

Question:

As we see in the scripture Paul is challenging us to rejoice in the Lord always, which can be very difficult when we face the challenges that life brings us at times. Do we trust in the promise that he highlights here: that the Lord is at hand and that we can bring our trials to Him? How does knowing that God cares for me help me to bring my anxious thoughts to Him? How might His peace be better than understanding exactly how it's all going to work out?

Prayer:

Lord, teach us, no matter how difficult the trials and challenges, to continually know that you are in our midst and that you will not leave us. Help us to look for you. Help us to always depend on your holy presence to be our strength and security. May we rejoice and give you thanks at all times because you are a good God. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:26-28

Week 4 - DAY: 7

Application:

There are many times that we come to the Lord and are not sure how or what to pray for, wanting to seek His will for our life along with the many decisions we need to make. We can be comforted in knowing that the Holy Spirit is interceding for us and knows the direction we need to take. Our role is to love our Lord and trust that he will bring about what is needed for His kingdom work, according to His purpose — even though we don't always know what to say. We can trust Him.

Question:

What might God be inviting me to consider as I read this passage? What is the role He's calling me to in this process? What's His role in this process? How do they work together?

Prayer:

We love you Lord and we pray in the power of your Holy Spirit, strengthen us in our times of weakness, and help us to stay focused on your purpose for our lives and your purpose for your church. Help us to be a community that seeks to love others with the love you pour out on us. We know we can fully trust you to lead us to be a witness to those you have called us to reach in this community and wherever you may lead us. In Jesus' name, Amen

-Insert Name here...