A GUIDE TO PRAYER
MINDING YOUR CALL

EQUIPPING WORLD-CHANGING DISCIPLES UMCdiscipleship.org

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church
INTRODUCTION

Brought to life by Bishop Rueben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, *The Guide to Prayer* books have been daily companions to thousands of Christian pilgrims since the original “blue book” was published in 1983. Three decades later, Upper Room Books released a fourth volume, *A Guide to Prayer for All Who Walk with God*, developed by John Mogabgab, the founding editor of *Weavings*.

The following excerpt from *A Guide to Prayer for All Who Walk with God* offers a one-week guide for prayer and reflection on the call to follow Christ.

MIND YOUR CALL

AFFIRMATION

I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope (Jer. 29:11).

PSALM 29

PSALM PRAYER

Gracious, merciful, and loving God, whose voice calls to us from over the waters like thunder, may we be ever mindful and attentive to your call so we might know what it is you would have us do. Be with us as we faithfully accept our calling without hesitation or fear, and enter into it with persistence, trust, and strength. Amen.
## Daily Scripture Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Lectionary Readings: Year A</th>
<th>Lectionary Readings: Year B</th>
<th>Lectionary Readings: Year C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Exodus 3:1-15</td>
<td>Song of Solomon 2:8-13</td>
<td>Jeremiah 2:4-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45</td>
<td>Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9</td>
<td>Psalm 81:1, 10-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Exodus 3:7-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1 Samuel 3:11-21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Jonah 1:1-3; 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Matthew 4:18-22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Luke 8:4-15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Acts 10:1-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Silence**

**Daily Readings for Reflection** *(see following excerpts)*
REFLECTION: SILENT AND WRITTEN

PRAYERS: FOR THE WORLD, FOR OTHERS, FOR MYSELF

OFFERING OF SELF TO GOD

Teach me your way, Lord, so that I can walk in your truth. Make my heart focused only on honoring your name. I give thanks to you, my Lord, my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify your name forever (Ps.86:11-12). Amen.

BLESSING

May the eyes of our hearts “have enough light to see what is the hope of God’s call, what is the richness of God’s glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God’s power that is working among us believers” (Eph. 1:18-19). Amen.

READINGS FOR REFLECTION

God draws each one of us to the heart of life in a time and manner uniquely suited to our own nature and circumstance. Your journey and mine cannot be the same, even if we are identical twins! Yet our many journeys share remarkable commonalities, points where we find comfort in human identification and common ground. The signs of God’s grace at work in us are often strikingly similar: perhaps a sense of being overwhelmed by prayer answered beyond our best hopes; the experience of anguish over prayer not answered the way we had hoped, yet in retrospect answered in an unexpected and perhaps deeper way; the intuition that God has called us to a task we felt was beyond our gifts or capacity, yet through faith and perseverance, we discovered it to be a genuine call for which God equipped us.

— Rueben P. Job and Marjorie J. Thompson, Companions in Christ
There is as much guidance in the way that closes behind us as there is in the way that opens ahead of us. The opening way reveals our potentials while the closing way reveals our limitations—and the two are the flip sides of the same coin, the coin called my true and created self. In the spiritual life, self-knowledge is the coin of the realm, and we can learn much about the whole coin from studying either side. . . .

The truth is that every time a door closes behind us, the rest of the world opens up in front of us. All we need to do is stop pounding on the door that is closed, turn around, and see the largeness of life that now lies open to our soul.

If we are to live our lives fully and well, we must learn to embrace the opposites, to live in a creative tension between our limits and our potentials. We must honor our limitations in ways that do not distort our nature—and trust and use our gifts in ways that fulfill the potentials God gave us. We must take the “no” of the way that closes and find the guidance it has to offer—and take the “yes” of the way that opens and respond with the “yes” of our lives.


My God, in these quiet moments I caught a glimpse of your vision for me. Inspire me, my God, to carry into the everydayness of my life all to which I aspire at such a moment as this. May my faith have feet and hands, a voice and a heart, that it may minister to others—that the gospel I profess may be seen in my life.

I go this hour to encounter the routine of the duty with a new vision. Equip me for my common tasks, that I may this day apply myself to them with fidelity and devotion. And not for myself alone do I pray:
Bless homemakers, mothers, and servants, who minister in the home and who maintain sacred sanctuaries to which tired persons return at the end of the day.

Bless doctors and nurses. May their work reflect God’s love and pity on those who leave this earth today.

Bless the teachers, the school administrators, and those who labor to keep school buildings clean and pleasant for those who study and learn there.

Bless coal miners and all who toil in grime and darkness, that we may enjoy clean and pleasant lives.

May your blessing rest upon all men and women who minister to others.

May each one come to know the joy of partnership with you. I give this prayer to you who inflames my soul with vision and desire, that I may be a faithful laborer in the fields you have assigned to my stewardship. Help me to be a good and faithful steward.

— Norman Shawchuck

There is no “typical” call. Other persons, no doubt more open-minded and willing than I, seem to experience their call in a gentler process, involving a gradual clarifying. Others make step-by-step choices, learning from their experience, heeding the counsel of mentors and friends, sorting and discerning. Commitment then becomes a kind of distilling process guided over a period of time by the Holy Spirit. The focus too of the call can differ. I name “the desire for God” as the grounding of my own call; others might name their
calls in terms of a life of service, community, or the poor. A call might be such that it requires all one’s life energies and a life commitment, or it might be, at a different level, a temporary call to service in a particular situation that lies as a burden on one’s heart. Its temporary quality does not make it any less a call. For most, the call has a particular container—a marriage, a church community, a mission site. At the deepest level, the call frees us. It enables us to see what really matters, to focus our love, to dedicate ourselves to something/Someone larger than ourselves, and so to enter consciously into that continual stream of losing and finding ourselves that is the mystery of life. God uses a variety of ways to get through to us, tailoring the call to the condition of the recipient. No matter how the call comes, whether explosively or gently, the response has to be worked out in daily fidelity, in ordinary life. Keeping the focus in the midst of the seductive values of the culture becomes our life task.

— Elaine M. Prevallet, sl, “Minding the Call,” *Weavings*

When we say Yes or No to calls for service on the basis of heady decisions, we have to give reasons, to ourselves and to others. But when we say Yes or No to calls, on the basis of inner guidance and whispered promptings of encouragement from the Center of our life, or on the basis of a lack of any inward “rising” of that Life to encourage us in the call, we have no reason to give, except one—the will of God as we discern it. Then we have begun to live in guidance. And I find He never guides us into an intolerable scramble of panting feverishness. The Cosmic Patience becomes, in part, our patience, for after all God is at work in the world. It is not we alone who are at work in the world, frantically finishing a work to be offered to God.

Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time. And it
makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the helm. And when our little day is done we lie down quietly in peace, for all is well.

— Thomas Kelly, A Testament of Devotion

Endeavor to be inclined always:
not to the easiest, but to the most difficult;
not to the most delightful, but to the most distasteful;
not to the most gratifying, but to the less pleasant;
not to what means rest for you, but to hard work;
not to the most, but to the least;
not to the highest and most precious, but to the lowest and most despised;
not to wanting something, but to wanting nothing.

— John of the Cross, Loving God through the Darkness

St. Paul did not want to be an apostle to the Gentiles. . . . He wanted to be a clever and appreciated young Jewish scholar, and kicked against the pricks. St. Ambrose and St. Augustine did not want to be over-worked and worried bishops. Nothing was farther from their intention. St. Cuthbert wanted the solitude and freedom of his hermitage on the Farne; but he did not often get there. St. Francis Xavier’s preference was for an ordered life close to his beloved master, St. Ignatius. At a few hours’ notice he was sent out to be the Apostle of the Indies and never returned to Europe again. Henry Martyn, the fragile and exquisite scholar, was compelled to sacrifice the intellectual life to which he was so perfectly fitted for the missionary life to which he felt he was decisively called. In all these, a power beyond themselves decided the
direction of life. Yet in all, we recognize not frustration, but the highest of all types of achievement. Things like this—and they are constantly happening—gradually convince us that the overruling reality of life is the Will and Choice of a Spirit acting not in a mechanical but in a living and personal way; and that the spiritual life of man does not consist in mere individual betterment, or assiduous attention to his own soul, but in a free and unconditional response to that Spirit’s pressure and call, whatever the cost may be.

— Evelyn Underhill, *Selections from the Writings of Evelyn Underhill*

Once having the vision, the second step to holy obedience is this: Begin where you are. Obey now. Use what little obedience you are capable of, even if it be like a grain of mustard seed. Begin where you are. Live this present moment, this present hour as you now sit in your seats, in utter, utter submission and openness toward Him. Listen outwardly to these words, but within, behind the scenes, in the deeper levels of your lives where you are all alone with God the Loving Eternal One, keep up a silent prayer, “Open Thou my life. Guide my thoughts where I dare not let them go. But Thou darest. Thy will be done.”

— Thomas Kelly, *The Sanctuary of the Soul*
THE UPPER ROOM RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES FOR THE SPIRITUAL CARE OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS:

THE GUIDE TO PRAYER SERIES

- **A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants**
  - #460 Deluxe Gift Edition $32.00
  - #559 Paperback Edition $20.00

- **A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People**
  - #710 Paperback Edition $20.00

- **A Guide to Prayer for All Who Seek God**
  - #999 Deluxe Gift Edition $22.40
  - #1001 Paperback Edition $20.00

- **A Guide to Prayer for All Who Walk with God**
  - #1328 Paperback Edition $20.00

**WEAVINGS**

*Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life* is a theme-based journal that threads together some of the unraveled ends of the Christian spiritual life—personal formation and social transformation, individual renewal and church renewal, prayer and ministry, contemplation and mission, Sunday and Monday. Reading group guidance is available online. Published quarterly.

Visit [http://weavings.upperroom.org](http://weavings.upperroom.org) for more information.
The Academy for Spiritual Formation is for laity and clergy who hunger for a deep spiritual experience. The Academy offers a disciplined Christian community, which emphasizes holistic spirituality, nurturing body, mind, and spirit. Participants spend forty days in residence (five days every three months) to deepen one’s own life with Christ and to develop spiritual leadership traits for the church and world. Five-day Academies are also available and held across the country.

Visit [http://academy.upperroom.org](http://academy.upperroom.org) for more information.

“I have never known a spiritual frontier which combines such a wide spectrum of Christian experience: the academic teaching, the spiritual guidance, the liturgical experience, the small group depth encounter and sharing, and silent reflection – not only balanced, but interwoven through the days. Yes – it changes lives, including mine.”

The Rev. Flora S. Wuellner
Retreat leader, spiritual guide and author of many books including “Feed My Shepherds”
IN MEMORY

JOHN STEVENSON MOGABGAB
1946-2014

John Mogabgab was instrumental in shaping the ministry of The Upper Room for the nearly thirty years. He founded the publication *Weavings: A Journal of Christian Spiritual Life* in 1986. It quickly became a channel for the best in writing about spiritual formation and the Christian pilgrimage. John served on the design team for the Academy for Spiritual Formation, which launched in 1983, and on the Academy board until his death.

In his most recent role as special projects editor in Upper Room Books, John collaborated with Bishop Rueben Job on *A Guide to Prayer for All Who Walk with God* and with the Henri Nouwen Society and the Henri Nouwen Legacy Trust in developing The Henri Nouwen Spirituality Series.

Besides these professional roles, John was a mentor and advisor to many staff members and interns at The Upper Room—always encouraging, always taking time for nuanced conversations. His influence through these personal relationships is beyond measure.
Before being elected a United Methodist bishop, Rueben Job served as World Editor and Publisher of The Upper Room from 1982-1984. During that period, The Upper Room held its first Academy for Spiritual Formation, our children’s devotional magazine *Pockets* had its first full year of publication, Emmaus was growing like a teenager, and the 600-millionth copy of *The Upper Room* daily devotional guide was printed. It was also during this time that Job and seminary professor Norman Shawchuck published the first *Guide to Prayer*, designed to help people pray while reflecting on the lectionary scriptures.

When he retired as bishop, Rueben returned to Nashville and went back to work at The Upper Room. In his new role, he became the founding director of the Pathways Center for Christian Spiritual Formation, continued his work on the *Guide to Prayer* books and other publications, and contributed greatly to our seminal small-group resource, *Companions in Christ*.

Many longtime staff of The Upper Room speak of Rueben’s calm, abiding presence, which invoked the presence of God. Please join us in remembering his life with celebration and gratitude as we all strive to live as he did—peacefully, prayerfully, and courageously—following in the steps of Jesus.