

WEEK 1 - THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

How to Use These Prayer Updates

We invite you to watch the video, as Michael Oh, Lausanne Movement Executive Director, shares an invitation to join in the month of prayer by visiting www.lausanne.org/pray



We ask you to set aside time each day – a holy, consecrated time – to savor the great gift of God in the Gospel, and to bring before Him the needs of a world where so many have yet to hear and experience the transforming news of the Gospel.

Some updates include sample prayers, while others include specific prayer points. These are provided as beginning points for your own communion with God and intercession for the nations. Don't allow the format to restrict the way that you respond to God. Just as we come from many cultures and traditions, may our worship and prayers be expressed in manifold ways to the glory of God.

In addition to reading and praying, consider how you might further consecrate yourself to God during this time. Would you consider fasting one meal a day, a day each week, or perhaps giving up something else that is precious to you like your morning coffee or your internet surfing? Would you be willing to go without these things in order to express to God your deep need for him to make himself known in you and in the world? Might this discipline of prayer and fasting be an aid to stirring up a holy hunger to see God glorified in those places where men and women are serving creation instead of the Creator.

How else might we together declare to God that we are expectant, waiting, and attentive to his Word and his Holy Spirit, wholly dependent upon him and completely his?

When the month is over, may it be that God has been lifted up and glorified, the world made further ready for the Gospel, and God's people renewed, rejoicing and ready to serve him!

Please join us in this prayer journey.



WEEK 1, DAY 1: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

What is the Gospel?

We invite you to watch the video, as Michael Oh, Lausanne Movement Executive Director, shares on the topic of "What is the Gospel?" by visiting www.lausanne.org/pray



"To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints... I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world... I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine... I have often intended to come to you... So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." Romans 1:7-15

It is interesting that Paul, speaking to Christians in Rome, says that he is "eager to preach the gospel to you". Why would he say that? Is it because he was concerned that some of the Romans were actually unbelievers? Perhaps. But more than this, Paul understands that the Gospel is the beginning and ending of our life in Christ. At every point in life we need the truth and fruit of the Gospel. It is our lifeblood. It is, as Paul says in the next verse "the POWER OF GOD".

Let us speak the Gospel to each other...hearing again and again the Gospel of Christ preached to us as believers...to recall what God has done for us! Indeed, this first week of our prayer emphasis we will look again and again in wonder at the power of the Gospel, and at the wisdom and graciousness of our God in what he has done to reconcile the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Have you lost your joy of God's salvation? Have you relied on your own strength instead of what he provides? Have you taken credit for what God has accomplished? Have you allowed the Gospel to continue to shape you since you first put your trust in him? In ways that we have not lived in the overwhelming confidence and faith in Christ's sacrifice, let's confess it to God. Together, let's declare again to him our need, and let's give praise to the only one worthy — our savior Jesus Christ, the God of our salvation.

Father God, forgive us for forgetting the joy of knowing your Son as personal Savior. Renew our hearts and minds as we reflect on the Gospel. Restore our passion and our energy for sharing you. Amen



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WEEK 1, DAY 2: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

The Gospel of First Importance

*"One of the most basic things that the **gospel** does is change prayer from mere petition to fellowship... without the **gospel**, there is no possibility of passion and delight to praise and approach God."*

— Timothy Keller

"Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Why start a month of prayer with reflecting on the Gospel? We all believe the Gospel, so shouldn't we get down to the "real" business of intercession?

If you read the epistles of Paul, the resounding answer is "May it never be". The Apostle repeatedly draws our attention to the Gospel as the root, source, and power for anything we do – including prayer. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are OF FIRST IMPORTANCE not only because those are the objective facts which save us when we believe, but because everything God wants to do in us and in the world flow out of these "simple" but powerful statements. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ".

What promise of God has been the sweetest or most the significant to you lately? Spend time now praising and thanking God for this promise.

What promise that God has made to the world, which remains at this time unfulfilled, are you most longing to see accomplished? Take that promise to the Lord, and plead the world's need before him, asking him to use you in fulfilling this promise. Remember that promise this week, and persistently approach God, the Righteous Judge, for its fulfillment in Christ.

Father, we also remember the promise you've made to Abraham, and confirmed again and again, that through Christ, all nations on earth would be blessed with the Gospel. We ask that you use us to fulfill that promise. Amen



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WEEK 1, DAY 3: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

Christ Alone: The Gospel as the True Source of all Humility

“What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” 1 Corinthians 4:7

What competes with the Gospel as the thing most precious in your life? Is there anything – an attitude, a ministry accomplishment, a material possession, a person, or a duty – that fights for your affection, trying to sit in the place of God? Do you find yourself looking for other ways to be happy, or do you, like George Mueller, believe that “the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day is to have my soul happy in the Lord”?

For some, it might be a temptation to think that effectiveness in our life and ministry comes through catchy phrases like being “relevant”, or having the right program or facilities, or even dressing in a certain way. For others, we might be tempted to believe that effectiveness comes through captivating personalities, good funding, or ministry success. Almost all Christian leaders are under the pressure of “too much to do and not enough time or funding to do it”. Our first priority, however, is to find our joy in God and him alone. If we don’t do this, we not only dishonor God, robbing Him of his rightful place of worship and Lordship, but we also put ourselves in the impossible position of trying to do what only God can do.

When we allow Christ, and his work, to be everything for us, it not only frees us from the race of needing to find the next big ministry trend, but it also produces in us a sweet humility which results in rest, security, and peace. We can rest in Christ’s power instead of cleverly designed programs. We can rest in the knowledge that we are a part of the Body, so we don’t have to compete or keep up. Instead we are free to cheer for and pray for those whom God is using greatly, and encourage and pray for those who feel weak and ineffective. It’s been said that all the resources that are needed for God’s Kingdom to be established in any given place are already there because Christ is there, and the Spirit of God is here. Alleluia!

Today thank God that Christ alone is all we need, and that we are humbled, liberated, and empowered to do the work he has called us to do.



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WEEK 1, DAY 4: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

Reconciled to God: The Gospel as the true source of all forgiveness

Father, as we continue to pray together, meet us here in fellowship. Give us eyes to see ourselves in light of the reality of the Gospel. Speak today, for your servants are listening.

Do we remember what God has done for us? Have we forgotten that there was a time when we were enemies to God...objects of his wrath because of our unbelief? Yet, even as His justice was bent against us, like the nation of Israel of old, his heart cried out:

"How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath." Hosea 11:8-9

Instead of destroying us, he set his love on us, reconciling us to himself in the blood of his son (2 Corinthians 5:19).

What would happen to our witness to the world if Christians everywhere repented of our self-absorption and self-importance, and recalled instead that we needed God to come down to us because we could not get to him. The Son of God was brutally put to death because that was what our treason against God demanded. Our sinful heart and our evil deeds find their only pardon on a bloody cross. If we think, perhaps, that God didn't have to go that far, we don't understand how badly we need a Savior. And what a Savior he is! Our sin can never outrun his forgiveness. The evils of men can never outstrip the grace of God in Christ. Alleluia, what a Savior!

Take a moment now and pray through God's word of mercy from Hosea. Though written about Israel long ago, we know that God does not change. As his people we are in need of his mercy as much as the Israelites were then, and we are recipients of the same unlimited loving-kindness that he has always shown his people. Let us, therefore, repent and rejoice in the greatness of God's grace and mercy.



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WEEK 1, DAY 5: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

United to Christ: The Gospel as the True Source of All Hope

Do you remember what it felt like to realize that you had been born again through Jesus Christ? Maybe it took time to understand the transformation that had taken place in your life, or maybe it was an instantaneous feeling of peace. George Whitfield was a powerful preacher during the Great Awakening in the 18th century. His constant message from John Chapter 3 was, "you must be born again". Year after year, he did not tire of preaching the truth that people must be made alive by God. Once, Whitfield was asked by a friend why he preached so continually that people *must* be born again, and his answer was, perhaps unsurprisingly, "Because - you must be born again."

"But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." Romans 8:10-11

The world is filled with religions that tell us that we must be better men and women. We must fulfill the requirements of the 5 pillars of Islam, follow uncompromisingly the noble eightfold path, and escape Saṃsāra through our own efforts. The belief that someone needs to be "saved" at all is scoffed at by many unbelievers. Saved from what, and by whom? What attempts at self-salvation do you see around you?

For Christians, the demand to save ourselves is terrifying. We know there is nothing we can do. The only way out is to be given a completely new life. We must be born again, but how? Romans 6:4, like the passage above, declares, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." The Gospel reminds us that when Christ was buried in the grave, all who believe were likewise sealed in death's tomb. Then, when Christ triumphed over even death, all who believe likewise are victoriously raised to new life. That, brothers and sisters, is our only hope – and it is a confident and blessed hope.

Look around you. See the lost. Pray for them.

Father, we pray the Gospel of grace over the lost in our lives and in our cities and countries. We remember how tiring and terrifying it was to feel responsible for our own salvation. We pray for them; we plead with you to open their eyes and enlighten their hearts to their need for a Savior, Jesus Christ. And Lord, we praise you for the great salvation that you have accomplished in Christ, the newness of life available through him to all who believe. Amen



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WEEK 1, DAY 6: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

Sealed by the Spirit: The Gospel as a Trinitarian Accomplishment

*"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of **him** who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in **Christ** might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised **Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:11-14*

In recent years, we've seen great growth in Trinitarian reflection. We have been reminded that, YES, ministry power is by the Spirit, and YES, the Spirit of God is working to sanctify us, but also that all of this is a result of the Spirit taking the Gospel and applying it to our hearts like a balm. The Gospel would not be good news if there were no Holy Spirit to apply it to hearts of stone. Hear that again, if God were not triune, there could be no good news. As one theologian has written,

"Jesus...commissioned his church to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' (Matt. 28:20). These three names, or rather this one divine name that points to three distinct persons, is spoken over every person brought into the church. It is not merely a formula to be recited for its own sake, but a kind of summary of the gospel, explaining the depths beneath what every believer experiences in salvation. When we encounter the gospel of God, the reality we come into contact with is the God of the gospel, and it is the task of the doctrine of the Trinity to explain that connection."¹

In light of that, not only has the doctrine of the Trinity moved out of stuffy classrooms and dusty tomes and into the realm of man's desperate need, but the Gospel itself has become sweeter because it calls us to glory in the very nature of God.

Therefore, let us join our hearts together in praise to the Triune God: to the Father who has called us to himself, to the Son who has won our redemption, and to the Holy Spirit who brings salvation to reality in our lives. Sing out:

*Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

—Thomas Ken

¹ Fred Sanders, "The Trinity: The God behind the Gospel," Credo Magazine, Volume 3, Issue 2: April 2013, Pages 21-22.



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WEEK 1, DAY 7: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

Called in His Body: The Gospel as the Life Blood of God's People

"What we cannot obtain by solitary prayer we may by corporate...because where our individual strength fails, there union and agreement are powerful." – John Chrysostom, 400 AD

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." – John 17:20-21

Tomorrow, we will begin a new week of prayer together. Reflect for a moment on our Gospel focus this week. Do you realize that while we may be dispersed around the world, we are reflecting on the gospel together and praying the same prayer? Men and women from Jerusalem to China, America, India, England, Tanzania, Brazil, Australia, Japan, France, Korea, Indonesia, Chile, and dozens of other countries have been praying together this week. What an awesome privilege to join our hearts together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Can you imagine the implications – that men and women all around the world, from such different cultures and peoples, have something so important in common that they would unite in one heart and spirit? It is something powerful enough to unite Palestinians and Israelis, Americans and Arabs, Croatians and Herzegovinians, Koreans and Japanese, Hutus and Tutsis. It is the Gospel of God.

And all of this is from God and for God! May it glorify him everywhere and always!

As we end our reflection on the good news of the Gospel for everyone, let's join together in passionate praise to the one who has "purchased men for God from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation". He has purchased us and joined us together as his children. The Gospel is the "glue" for God's people – despite the differences in our locations, our colors, our incomes, or our vocations. Celebrate the truth that, in Christ, the dividing wall has been torn down, never to be rebuilt. As brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world, let's commit to praying for one another and doing all we can to support one another in sharing the good news of the Gospel, until all have heard.

Father, your Son died to unite a people who would, by their unity and love, prove to the world that you sent him. May it be so with us! Let the Gospel shape us daily into a people more and more completely united, for the glory of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen



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