

# Day of Prayer

# Living on the Rock



## Skyline Church of Christ

March 7 & 8, 2003



*Skyline Church of Christ*  
*Loving God, Loving People*  
*to the Praise of His Glorious Grace!*

# Day of Prayer

Thanks for coming to our Day of Prayer. *Living on the Rock* is our 2003 theme at Skyline. Throughout the year we are focusing on Spiritual Formation through the Sermon on the Mount. Much of our time today will be spent praying through the first section of the Sermon on the Mount — the beatitudes. Plan to spend about 90 minutes in prayer.

Here are a few hints on how this Day of Prayer and the Day of Prayer workbook works.

1. Please maintain silence in the lobby and auditorium.
2. Please turn your cell phone to silent.
3. When you get into your seat in the auditorium, please begin working your way through the Day of Prayer workbook. The workbook consists of four sections — an introduction about the importance of solitude, praying through the beatitudes, intercessory prayer for our church family, and a conclusion relating to solitude.
4. Please do not rush (“Be still and know. . .”).
5. As you read the pages of the workbook, you will notice passages, devotional thoughts, prayer suggestions, or prayer requests on nearly every page. Please prayerfully read this material. Please take time to pray as you read. Stop as often as you like and pour out your heart to God. The whole idea is to pray through the workbook.
6. Of course, you may think of many things to pray about which are not written in the workbook.
7. You may wish to grab some friends while you are in the lobby and get them to go to a classroom with you where you can pray aloud together as a group.
8. Please return the workbook to the table in the lobby when you have finished.
9. In having a Day of Prayer program like this, one of the hardest things is to get people to be quiet. So again, I ask you to be quiet. Whispers only in the lobby, absolute silence in the auditorium.

Thanks again for coming to the Day of Prayer. I have already prayed for you this week that God will prepare your heart.

To God be the Glory!

Bob Clark



# Solitude





# Solitude

## Mark 1:35

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

## Invitation to a Journey

Jesus made it a point in the midst of a demanding schedule to set aside a quiet time to be with God His father. Truth is, many of us do not set aside time for quiet. The television provides a kind of video wallpaper for our homes. Music or talk radio is our constant companion in the car. In fact, the quiet of this auditorium might make you a bit uncomfortable because, well, you just aren't accustomed to this much quiet.

Today I want to invite you to begin a journey into the presence of God. While we begin today with this 90 minute walk, I want to encourage you to continue the journey in the future, regularly setting aside a period of time to shut out all the distractions and just be alone in the quiet with God. We begin the journey with some thoughts about solitude with God.

## Short Quotes to Consider

“For that is the cause why there are so few contemplative persons to be found, for that few can wholly withdraw themselves from things created and perishing.” *Thomas á Kempis*

“The sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he doesn't know how to stay quietly in his room.” *Blaise Pascal*

“[To practice the presence of God] the heart must be empty of all else, because God wills to possess the heart alone; and as He cannot possess it alone unless it be empty of all besides, so He cannot work in it what He would, unless it be left vacant to Him.” *Brother Lawrence*

## A Longer Quote to Consider

The sin many of us fall into is not that we shake our fists at God and defy Him to His face; that is the sin of unbelievers. Our sin is that we passively rebel against God, filling our lives with so much noise and busyness that God's voice cannot, or will not, penetrate.

If my kids are playing outside and I so much as whisper the phrase “ice cream,” they can hear me from across the field. On the other hand, if they're two feet away from me and I scream out “dinner,” it's amazing how poor their hearing can be.

They know better than to shake their fist at me and say, “Forget you, Dad, we're playing.”

They've tasted the fruit of such behavior and found it wanting. So instead they try to adopt a more stealthy approach. "Oh, were you calling us, Dad? Sorry, we didn't hear you."

It's not open rebellion, but it serves the same purpose — by their busyness they keep their father's voice from calling them into a new place. We do the same thing.

Cultivating the quiet is a painful experience when we are addicted to noise, excitement, and occupation. Opening the door to spiritual quiet can also open the door to spiritual fear and loneliness. It takes a great amount of courage to face God.

According to Pascal, we're often afraid that if we start to slow down, the truth of our deeply felt misery will assail us. We lack the courage to confront this misery, so we force ourselves to live at breakneck speed with maximum noise so we will be too numb or too busy to notice the pain.

The difficulty of simplicity is that it will, at times (especially in the early stages as we break our addiction to diversion), lead us into soul boredom, gloom, depression, and possibly even to despair. These are facts of the spiritual life that have to be confronted. I would be less than honest if I suggested that one day our lives are filled with diversions and the next day we walk hand-in-hand with God in glorious rapture. A drug addict cannot expect to give up drugs without paying the price of withdrawal. We who have been drugged by our diversions cannot expect to enter the quiet without a struggle. Our souls will roar for diversion, the fix that saves us from God's presence.

From *Seeking the Face of God* by Gary Thomas

## **A Prayer From the Quiet**

God wants to be with you! He wants you to be still long enough to know Him. That alone should give us cause to praise Him and thank Him. The very idea that the God who created the heavens and earth wants to spend time with you! The very idea that God who is very involved in the running of the universe cares to be with you! Spend time thanking Him. Confess your misplaced priorities in letting the temporal distractions of this world sidetrack you from ordering your world and being with Him. Begin a new journey with God today. Ask Him to walk with you in the days to come.

We often make noises about wanting to be like Jesus. Here is a concrete change we can make in our lives to be more like Him.

# The Beatitudes





# Nowhere Else To Go

## Matthew 5:3

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

### Blessed

The first word of the first recorded sermon from Jesus says so much about Him and us. Jesus did not come to condemn, but to save. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17). Are those the words you expect from Jesus? Do you have this adversarial view of God that leads you to expect words of condemnation rather than blessing? Take time to praise God for His loving nature. Thank Him for offering blessing rather than condemnation.

### The Poor in Spirit

If you are poor in spirit you realize you are bankrupt before God — hopelessly in debt with no way to pay your way out. You have nowhere to go but to God. This is where the "prodigal son" was when he had blown all his money and realized he had nowhere to go but home. "After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need" (Luke 15:14). This is where the bleeding woman was after she had spent all she had seeking the cure from doctors before turning to Jesus as a "last resort." "She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse" (Mark 5:26). Nowhere else to go. Humility. We don't have the answers within. God is the only option.

- Humility is "the sovereign virtue. . .the mother and root of all virtue." *John Calvin*
- Humility is the "root" of our spiritual life. *Andrew Murray*

The poor in spirit realize that their greatest spiritual achievements do not begin to earn a relationship with God. "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

The poor in spirit realize they are not the center of the universe. If you find yourself frustrated at your spouse or children, other drivers, co-workers, and any situation that does not go just the way you want it to go — you need to realize you are lusting to be treated like God. The lust to be served, honored, and noticed is nothing less than a lust to be treated like God. The poor in spirit realize it is not the purpose for the world's existence to make them happy and comfortable.

Take time to pray about being poor in spirit. Do you understand grace — that God saves you in spite of you? Praise Him for His grace. Do you understand salvation — because you are a sinner you deserve to go to hell, but God through Jesus has rescued and saved us from hell? Thank Him for salvation. Do you struggle with wanting to be the center of the universe? Confess your struggle to God. Ask God to open your eyes to see Him as the rightful God of the universe.

# Bearing the Pain

## Matthew 5:4

*“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*

### Mourn

We experience pain as members of our church family watch at the bedsides of loved ones who are in their last days or start to rebuild their lives after the funeral. We experience the pain of this world as we sit on the precipice of war with young men from our community among the first scheduled to enter the uncertainties of the battlefield. But what of the pain involved in acknowledging your own sin? Mourning for what you have done and in some cases, what you have become. How easy it is to just excuse our sin — after all, we are much better than many people in the world.

John the Baptist said, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham” (Matthew 3:8-9). Those listening to John’s sermon excused their sins by saying, “Hey, we’re Abraham’s children!” How easy it is to similarly excuse ourselves. “I’m a member of the Church of Christ. We have all the doctrine down just right.” Sin is sin whether you are of the purest Abrahamic bloodline or fourth-generation “Church of Christ.”

The time has come to end the games we play and the excuses we offer and begin mourning for the sin in our life. Rather than being “full of ourselves” to the point of excusing our sin, we need to humble ourselves and start grieving. Let’s not enter this time of prayer eager to tell God how great we are and how much He needs us. Rather, let us approach Him on our faces. “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’” (Luke 18:13).

Like the Christians scattered around Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, some of us would do well to mourn the years we have wasted away in sin. “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry” (1 Peter 4:3). Like Ezra, we may benefit from some old fashioned weeping and fasting to acknowledge our sin before God. “While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites — men, women and children — gathered around him. They too wept bitterly. . . . Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles” (Ezra 10:1, 6).

Take time to mourn. Grieve not only about suffering and death, but also about the sin in your life, wasted years, broken relationships, neglected opportunities, misplaced priorities, angry words. Perhaps we need to be honest with God and confess like an adulterer, we have been unfaithful to Him.

## Comforted

There is no cleaner feeling than that after spending time on your face before God. His comfort can just wash over us with the most cleansing refreshment. Take time to consider some words God has chosen to express His forgiveness for our sins. With each verse you read, offer your praise and thanksgiving to God!

“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit” (Psalm 32:1-2).

“You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. Selah. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger” (Psalm 85:2-3).

“ . . . as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

“But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared” (Psalm 130:4).

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18 ).

“No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34 ).

"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him" (Romans 4:7-8).

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins. . . .” (Colossians 2:13).

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9).

# Gentleness 101

## Matthew 5:5

*“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”*

### Looking in the Mirror

According to a survey published by *U.S. News and World Report*, while 89% of Americans think incivility is a problem, only 1% think their own behavior is uncivil. Most of us find it much easier to blame rock music, talk radio, or mean-spirited politics than to see the clear reflection in the convicting mirror of self-examination.

Are you gentle? Be honest. Would people describe the way you deal with others as gentle?

### Looking in the Scriptures

***Jesus was gentle —***

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

"Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey' " (Matthew 21:5).

***Paul described His ministry as gentle and made appeals based on Jesus' gentleness —***

"As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children" (1 Thessalonians 2:6b-7).

"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you — I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away" (2 Corinthians 10:1)!

***The fruit of the Holy Spirit includes gentleness —***

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

***Christians are called to be gentle —***

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near" (Philippians 4:5).

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12).

***Church leaders are called to be gentle rather than argumentative —***

“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11).

“Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth. . .” (2 Timothy 2:25).

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. . .” (1 Peter 3:15).

## **Looking at Some Challenging Quotes**

“The Scripture speaks of no real Christian who has an ugly, selfish, angry, and contentious spirit. Nothing can be more contradictory than a morose, hard, closed, and spiteful Christian.” *Jonathan Edwards*

“The Spirit of the God-man, who was sent to reveal the nature of our Creator, was clothed in gentleness; and this virtue allowed Him to enter into the lives of broken, hurting people. He wants to give us this same capacity for compassion.” *Gary Thomas*

“What will it profit a man if he gains his cause, and silences his adversary, if at the same time he loses that humble, tender frame of spirit in which the Lord delights, and to which the promise of his presence is made.” *John Newton*

“We can’t shout people into righteousness. In fact, it has been my experience that those Christians who shout the loudest often have the most guilt-ridden consciences. What they need more than anything else is to be overwhelmed with the reality of the gentle God who loves them.”  
*Gary Thomas*

## **From the Mirror to Our Knees**

Jesus was gentle. We are called to be gentle. Spend some time reflecting on your gentleness. Does this word describe you? Does this word describe Skyline Church of Christ? We are called to be gentle rather than argumentative. The idea some have that Christian maturity means a harsh argumentative spirit is contrary to scripture. When people are ignorant of our hope, our response is to be gentle. Even when people are guilty of sin, our response is to be gentle.

Pray about it — thanking God for His gentleness, confessing times when we have not been gentle, and asking for God to clothe us with gentleness. Ask God to make each of us gentle. Ask God to make our church family gentle.

# An Appetite for Righteousness

## Matthew 5:6

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”*

### Filled

What gives your life meaning? From what do you get “your fill?”

Some people get their fill from doing evil. “They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence” (Proverbs 4:17). Evil. That’s their food — that’s what keeps them going — that’s what fuels their life.

Many Christians trying to eliminate sinful behavior from their life experience frustration and even disillusionment because of repeated failure to break sinful patterns in their life. The frustration may be rooted in where they get “their fill.” For some, their life becomes a legalistic check list of all the things they don’t want to do. That list becomes the focus of their life. They are happy and fulfilled when avoiding those behaviors, frustrated and empty when they practice the despised behavior.

Jesus “got His fill” from obeying God. “‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work’” (John 4:34).

The greatest passion of our life should be walking with God in obedience.

We will never have a fulfilling relationship with God that is based on keeping a legalistic list of “thou shalt not’s.”

Nor will we find true fulfillment in chasing a “spiritual high.” Look at any person in scripture who walked with God on any kind of significant journey. The highs were few and far between. The highs were not the times when they grew and deepened their relationship with God. Much more time is spent in the dryness of the desert. It was the wilderness experiences that led God’s people to a deeper, more meaningful walk with Him.

Some Christians experience great frustration, even disillusionment, in their never ending quest for a quick fix leading to a greater “spiritual high.” When the journey leads to the wilderness, the response is not to view this as a time to purify your faith and know God in a deeper way. The response is to doubt God and self. If God is good, why am I not on a perpetual spiritual high? If I am in the valley, there must be something wrong with me?

Like Jesus, we must learn to get our fill from an obedient walk with God. What fuels our life should not be a checklist of don’ts or the chase for a feeling, but the quiet satisfaction of knowing we are serious about obeying God.

## Seeking God

Some followed Jesus not because they wanted to walk with Him, but because of what He could give them. “Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill’” (John 6:26). The entire book of Job is focused on answering the question — what satisfies Job — is it God, or the goodies God provides?

God and Satan discussed the matter. “‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’ Satan replied. ‘Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face’” (Job 1:9-11).

We know the story. All the goodies were taken away. God revealed to Job something far more fulfilling than any earthly goodies — He revealed Himself. “Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: ‘Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. ‘Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone — while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy’” (Job 38:1-7)?

As the story comes to a conclusion, Job realizes that obeying God offers ultimate fulfillment. “Then Job replied to the Lord: ‘I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. ‘You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes’” (Job 42:1-6).

## Ultimate Delight

Our ultimate delight needs to be in God. Meditate on the words of the Psalms. “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2). “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4). “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction” (Psalm 119:92).

Spend time praying about fulfillment in life. Confess to God if you are sometimes too interested in pleasing people rather than Him, more interested in your own comfort than following Him wherever He leads, more interested in the gifts than the Giver.

Ask God to cultivate within you a love for Him. A deep, burning desire to obey Him at all costs. Is it time to make a commitment to God that you will place Him in the highest place?

What happens is amazing — when we focus our hearts on God rather than the “thou shalt not” list or the search for a spiritual high, we will find ourselves changed from the inside out. No longer will we be drawn to sin, instead, we will be filled with joy from the presence of God.

# Learning Mercy

## Matthew 5:7

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*

### A God of Mercy

Our God is a God of mercy. “For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath” (Deuteronomy 4:31). “Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy” (Micah 7:18). “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

Obviously, if we want to be godly, we must be merciful. “Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear — hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh” (Jude 22-23). “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Colossians 3:12-14).

### A Moment with Jesus

Take a moment to read this story Jesus told in Matthew 18:21-30.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

“The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

“But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.”

My first response to this story is disbelief and then judgment on the unforgiving one. I think I miss the point in more ways than one. First, I am not having mercy on this unforgiver. Second, I am focusing on the wrong character in the story. I need to spend less time focusing on the unforgiving person and more time focusing on the incredible forgiveness of the king. The forgiveness of this huge debt is downright crazy — nobody has ever heard of that kind of forgiveness. That's the point of this whole story — God forgives us in a ridiculously merciful way, and that's how we are to forgive others.

## **Time to Pray**

Take a few moments to be real before God. Is your first response to have mercy when someone is caught in sin? Do you have mercy on those who doubt? Or is your first response to pick up a handful of stones and prepare to launch? Praise God for His mercy! Thank Him for the mercy He has shown to you over and over and over again! Confess your judgmental spirit, if appropriate. Ask God to fill your heart with mercy! In fact, boldly ask God to help you become ridiculous in your forgiveness, just like Him!

# Purer in Heart

## Matthew 5:8

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”*

### Focus on the Savior

When a Christian man or woman decides to clean up the impurity of their hearts they often begin by focusing on all the improper sexual things to which they are exposed. They are well-meaning. They really want to stop the impurity, but they soon find themselves frustrated and unable to think about anything but the images they seek to purge from their memories. In fact, many Christians have experienced the ineffectiveness of trying to avoid lustful thoughts until, they are obsessing about sex!

Rather than taking an outside-in approach to cleaning up our hearts, we need to take the inside-out approach of addressing the root cause of impurity and lust. Lust is often rooted in a hunger for intimacy, an idolatrous worship of the body, or a compulsion for power and control. The way those root causes are addressed is not by focusing on what you want to eliminate, but by focusing on what will meet those inner needs and alleviate the “need” for lust satisfaction. What meets those inner needs and uproots the causes for lust? God. We need to focus more time on Almighty God, His Son and our Savior, Jesus, and God’s Holy Spirit.

When we are so captivated by God that we enjoy a divine romance of sorts, the lusts of the flesh lose their pull. So spend time praising God as creator, sustainer, redeemer, and lover of our souls. Lose yourself in meditation of His mercy, grace, and love. Feed on His word. Long for His presence. As you sense His presence, you will be moved to confess your impurity, give thanks for His cleansing you, and ask for His Spirit to continue to transform you. Worship God in prayer — tell Him of His glory, power, honor! Worship Him as the Ancient of Days! Those with pure hearts will see God. And those who see God will have pure hearts.

### For the Married

A special note to those married people who are spending this time in prayer. One of the greatest ways to purify your hearts is to build a passionate sexual relationship of the holiest kind with your husband or wife. After all, we are to become “one flesh” with our husband or wife (Genesis 2:24). Sex is not a “four-letter word” in the Bible. God’s word instructs Christians to remember that their bodies belong not just to themselves but also to their husband or wife. The husband and wife are to fulfill “the marital duty” to their spouse, that is, they are supposed to be willing, eager participants in the holy sexual relationship shared by husband and wife (1 Corinthians 7:2-5 and Hebrews 13:4). In Proverbs 5:15-19 God reminds the readers that one of the best ways to avoid adultery is to “drink water from your own cistern.” This passage contains a beautiful, tasteful picture of the joys of sexual love between husband and wife. By all means, this is a matter for prayer — thanking God for the gift of sex in marriage, confessing any defrauding of the marital right, and asking God to help you drink deeply from the well of a sexual relationship with your husband or wife.

# Working for Peace

## Matthew 5:9

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”*

### Sons of Thunder

While Jesus calls us to be peacemakers, not all of us start out that way. In fact, some of us were anything but peacemakers when we were called into the family of God. We understand why Jesus called James and John “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). In fact, we understand the response James and John suggested when those pesky Samaritans were less than cooperative to Jesus and his followers as they passed through town. “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village” (Luke 9:51-56). In fact, we have called fire down on a few people before, haven’t we?

### Prayer Time

Okay, you sons and daughters of thunder gathered to pray — look back over your life for a few moments — are you less volatile now than you were five years ago? Six months ago? Maybe it’s time to pray a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s transforming power because you see He’s at work in your life — smoothing out the rough edges and making you over into the image of Jesus.

Or maybe it’s time to pray a prayer of confession, knowing that you are an argument waiting to happen, or you have been harboring grudges in your heart for too long. It’s hard work to be reconciled and sometimes we know what God wants us to do, we just do not want to put forth the effort to do it!

Or maybe it’s time to get serious about praying for transformation, asking God to fill us with the Holy Spirit and change us inside-out.

Claim the promises of God! He promises to be right in our presence when we are sitting down with two or three people trying to work out our differences. “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:19-20).

God can do more than we ask or imagine! “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. . .” (Ephesians 3:20). There is so much to pray about! Start the transformation today!

# Living and Dying for God

## Matthew 5:10-12

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

## Persecuted

The very first murder was in reality the result of religious persecution (Genesis 4:1-15). Scripture warns us that persecution comes into the life of a believer. “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. . .” (2 Timothy 3:12). Scripture is filled with examples of people who were persecuted because of their faith.

**Joash** — “Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him. . . . His officials conspired against him and assassinated him at Beth Mollo, on the road down to Silla” (2 Kings 12:2, 20).

**Joseph** — “When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, ‘This is how your slave treated me,’ he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.” (Genesis 39:19-20).

**Elijah** — “Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them” (1 Kings 19:1-2).

**Hanani** — “Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people” (2 Chronicles 16:10).

**Micaiah** — “. . .and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely'" (2 Chronicles 18:26).

**Jeremiah** — “When the priest Pashhur son of Immer, the chief officer in the temple of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the Lord's temple” (Jeremiah 20:1-2).

**Jesus** — “They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way” (Luke 4:29-30).

**Christians at Smyrna** — “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

**The apostles** — “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41).

**Paul** — “I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me” (Acts 20:23).

In fact, scripture warns that if everyone is comfortable with you, you just may be a false prophet! “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

Our response to persecution should be blessing and prayer. “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19). “But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. . .” (Matthew 5:44).

## Questions to Ponder

Have you faced persecution? If so, thank God for His presence in seeing you through. Thank Him that even if someone takes your life, you know He has prepared a place for you! If not, why not? Is it because you really have not been in situations where enemies of the cross have persecuted Christians? Or could it be because you have cared more about acceptance from the world or the church that you did not speak up for truth, choosing instead to stay in a comfort zone where you would receive the approval of men? Have we so isolated ourselves in order to keep the purity of the faith that we have failed to engage the world? Talk through these questions with God — giving praise and thanks, confessing, and petitioning God where appropriate.

## The Faces of Persecution from *Voice of the Martyrs*

Spend time interceding for these believers who have been persecuted!



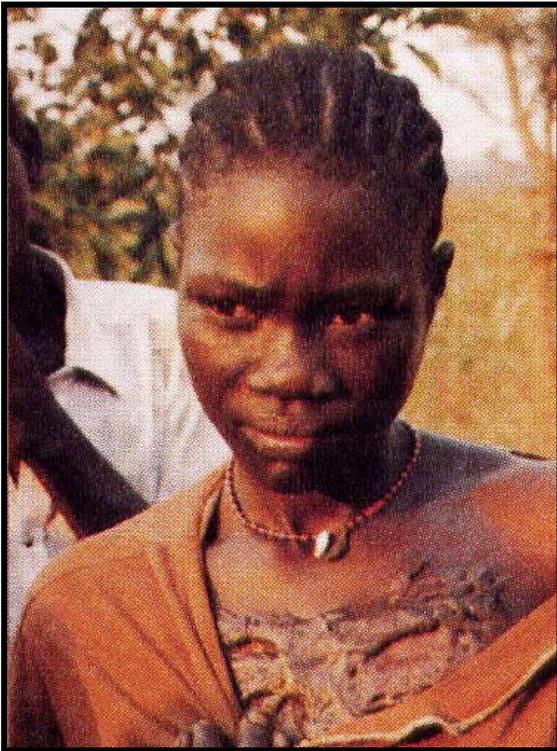
Pakastani Christians mourning a martyr



Acid was poured over the body of 17 year old Gulnaz when she refused to deny Jesus.



Rhanja Masih under arrest in Pakistan



Abuk Ajin from Sudan was mutilated when as a 14-year old she refused to deny Jesus Christ.



Kamerino was just a boy when soldiers burned him, knowing he was a Christian.

# Intercession





# Intercessory Prayer

## 1 Samuel 12:23

*“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.”*

Samuel understood that failing to pray for God’s people was sinful. How seriously do we take the practice of intercessory prayer? How easy is it for us to say, “I’ll be praying for you” and yet never utter the first prayer? Being on journey with God means being concerned about the others we meet along the way.

Often our intercession is limited to praying about physical needs. Yet in scripture examples of prayer are, with few exceptions, focused on spiritual matters — knowing God, growing in God, living as redeemed being a few examples. So as you intercede for the people on the list that follows, may I encourage you to focus on more than the physical ailments or situations involved.

There is more to praying for an expectant parent, for example, than praying for a smooth delivery and a healthy baby (while that is important). Pray for the parents’ relationship to become more Christ-like through the years. Ask God to bind the hearts of the parents together with that of the unborn child. Ask God to help the parents deal with the stress, doubts, joys, and frustrations that come with being a parent. Perhaps most importantly, ask God to use the birth to draw the parents closer than ever to Him and ask him to nurture the child’s faith throughout her life.

There is more to praying for a sick person than just praying about physical symptoms and healing. For example, God’s word teaches in James 1, 1 Peter 1, and 2 Corinthians 1 that God can work powerfully through the trials we humans go through, to make us stronger in faith as a result of our hardships. So don’t be afraid to ask God to refine the heart and faith of the sick person, using the illness and any accompanying spiritual doubts or struggles to build up the faith of the ill one.

1. **Pray for those who have been baptized thus far in 2003** — William Sharp, Spencer Perkins, Michael Simpson, Chris Taylor, Alyssa Hopper, Hannah Irvin, Elizabeth Rahm, Brian Pilcher, Katlyn Threet, and Leah Burress.
2. **Lizzie Freeman** (Tess White’s grandmother) is in JMCGH.
3. **Willie Bradford** (our deaf brother) is now at Care and Share.
4. **Virginia Crawford** is at home, but is still trying to recover from her latest illness.
5. **Wilma Osborne** continues to have problems with her eye.
6. **Lori Sharp** has recovered from pneumonia.
7. **Susie Jarvis** (Kristen Mitchell’s grandmother) had surgery.
8. **Othella Pierce** (Margaret Morrison’s mother) is hospitalized in Southhaven. She will not receive any more treatments. Please pray for healing in the relationship between Margaret’s sister and her father.
9. **Hal Burluson, Jr.** has had a recurrence of malignant melanoma. Initial tests results are good following surgery! Doctors will closely follow his progress.
10. **Beth Clevenger** (former member Eve’s mother) passed away. Please pray for Eve and her family (father, Tommy and sister, Emily) as they mourn.
11. **Tommie Keen** (Sid Spencer’s sister) has returned to work! Give thanks to God for the incredible blessing.
12. **Tommy McDonald’s parents** have been experiencing health problems.

13. **Janet Boyling** (Nita White's cousin) is in a coma.
14. **Mark Goff** has been diagnosed with a kidney disease. Please pray he will respond to medication.
15. **Ginger Newbill** is recovering from a medical procedure.
16. **Cherin Waits** (Jimmie and Linda Welch's daughter) has been diagnosed with a heart problem.
17. **Bill Guth** (Chelsea Bennet's grandfather) is recovering from cancer surgery.
18. **Christian Nicholas** (grandson of Philip Nicholas from Campbell Street) has been diagnosed with Muscular Atrophy Syndrome.
19. **Ashley Cooper** (Ginger Newbills' friend) is dealing with complications from rheumatoid arthritis.
20. **Mona Chamber's** mother will undergo tests.
21. **Judy Buckley** (Kimberly Kail's mother) had additional heart surgery in Memphis.
22. Pray for **God's guidance** for our Panama Medical Mission — the group will leave April 11 for what looks like either Sambu or Jaque. Continue to pray for God to open doors and close doors and make it clear where we should go.
23. Pray for **world peace**, for the **leaders** of the United States and other nations, for the **United Nations** and **NATO**, for the **people of Iraq** who are being oppressed by their government, and pray for **Sadam Hussein** and **Usama bin Laden**.
24. **Robert Groves and Andy Bechtel** (both from Jackson) asks for our prayers as they serve in Kuwait.
25. **J. D. Dixon** (Richard Roger's friend) has health problems.
26. Tamika Yarbrough asks for prayer for **Loraine Hudson** who is battling cancer and is currently in Skilled Nursing.
27. **David Riddick** is back home and working National Guard on the weekends!
28. **Lindsay Mehr** is recovering from surgery.
29. **Loretta Baggett** (Ann Woods' sister-in-law) has extensive cancer.
30. **Elizabeth Richardson** (Norma Taylor's mother), **Ceci Mullins** (Todd's mother), **Wayne Wright**, **Linda Corley** (C. Forsythe's mother), **Tommie Keen** (S. Spencer's sister), **Othella Pierce** (M. Morrison's mother), **Shirley LaMastus** (L. Birl's mother) and **Doug Daniel** are undergoing treatment. **Elizabeth** has had a rough week. **Shirley** had surgery at Vanderbilt this week. The results were not encouraging. She will be hospitalized another week.
31. **Lamaricus Davidson** is in West TN State Prison.
32. **Nursing home residents:** *Northbrooke:* **Louis Hardcastle** (room 203); *Forest Cove:* **Myrtle Insko** (Pat Snider's aunt - room 128); *Maplewood:* **Forest Hester** (Lee Birl's grandmother - room 300-A), *Crockett County:* **Bertha Summar** (room 40-A); *Dickson, TN:* **Cooper Taylor**, *Veteran's Home:* **LaVelle Sullivan** (east room 4); *Laurelwood Health Care Center:* **Lillian Waits** (Room 218).
33. Our college students — *ACU:* **Keith Clark & Lauren Self**; *ASU* **Jay Pendergrass**; *DLU:* **Kristen Chambers, Julie McDonald & Ashley Warren**; *FHU:* **Brandon & Nichole Karnes, Brittney Morrison, Tyler Osborne, Brooke Perkins, Susie Ray & Stefanie Wylie**; *HU:* **Grant Jackson, Seth Rudd & Adam Simon**; *JSCC:* **Jeremiah Eddleman, Josh Evans, Brandon Pritchard, Celeste Richardson, & Joseph Welch**; *Lambuth:* **Brian Pearson**; *Mount San Jacinto:* **Ashley Bonner**; *MTSU:* **Justin Darby**; *U of M:* **Meredith Simon & Lee Taylor Walker**; *U of MS:* **John Robert Mehr**; *U of MS Law School:* **Morton Smith**; *UT Knoxville:* **John Anderson, Ken Johnson & Ryan Parsons**; *UTHSC:* **Nick Powers & Brian Short**, *UU:* **Russ McKelvey & Clark Short**.

34. **Kristen Chambers** is going on a campaign to Mexico. **Keith Clark** is leading a campaign group to Virginia Beach. **Ashley Warren** is going on a campaign to Saba, an island in the Northern Antilles.
35. Preparing for marriage: **Mark Goff & Kimberly Stoll.**
36. Expectant parents: **Keith & Sonya Ray, Joe & Kim Leonard, Clay & Michelle Beaver, David & Jennifer Steele, Charlie & Emily Lansdell and Allen & Karla Garner.**

## Church Unity

Pray for unity of God's people — not only unity in the Skyline family and the Jackson area, but also for unity among believers around the world. May God unite us and make us one. Just before our Lord's death, he prayed — "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).

## Our Deacons and their Ministries

### **Keith Anderson**

*Nursery and  
Pre-school Ministry*

### **Lance Boyd**

*Vacation Bible School*

### **Larry Chambers**

*Missions*

### **Eric Cohu**

*Youth Ministry*

### **Alan DeJarnatt**

*Adult Education*

### **Shannon Dunlap**

*Singles Ministry*

### **Al Earls**

*The Honors Program*

### **Alan Ellis**

*Host Home Guest Outreach*

### **Buddy Gresham**

*Finances*

### **Mark Harville**

*Missions*

### **Jeff Howell**

*College Ministry*

### **Danny Jackson**

*Assembly Management*

### **David Johnson**

*Men's Ministry*

### **Charlie Lansdell**

*Youth Ministry*

### **John Mehr**

*Assembly Management*

### **Scott Owens**

*Small Groups*

### **Glen Pendergrass**

*Communication,  
Media Outreach*

### **Jim Pentecost**

*Training for Worship*

*and Bible Land*

### **David Perkins**

*Youth Ministry*

### **Mike Philpot**

*Children's Ministry*

### **Chuck Purcell**

*College Ministry*

### **David Raines**

*Small Groups*

### **John Robinson**

*Benevolence*

### **Billy Schrivner**

*Building and Grounds*

### **Todd Swims**

*Small Groups*

### **Greg Walker**

*Building and Grounds*

### **Tom Ward**

*Visitor Hospitality*

### **Karl Warren**

*Children's Education*

*It's easier to spend time  
criticizing our deacons  
and their ministries  
than it is to pray for them!  
Don't forget — your prayers  
may make the difference in their ministry!*

# Pray for Our Elders and Ministers

**Give thanks for our elders and intercede for them as they shepherd the flock at Skyline!**

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Hebrews 13:17).

**Pray for our ministers, that God will use them to build the kingdom!**

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should” (Colossians 4:2-4).



***Doug Daniel***  
*Elder*



***Bob Smith***  
*Elder*



***Tommy McDonald***  
*Elder*



***Danny Walker***  
*Elder*



***Bob Osborne***  
*Elder*



***Bob Clark***  
*Preaching Minister*



***Carl Rudd***  
*Elder*



***Jamie Leland***  
*Youth Minister*



***Mike Short***  
*Elder*



***Sam Wylie***  
*Media Outreach  
Minister*

## Pray for our Panamanian Preachers



**Jose Berrugate**  
in Bayamon



**Udinio Cabrera**  
in Puerto Pina



**Jesus Cedeno**  
in Cucunati



**Aurelio Douiaza**  
in Sambu



**Aristedes Otero**  
in El Real



**Natalio Rivera**  
in Sambu



**Felix Perea**  
in LaPalma

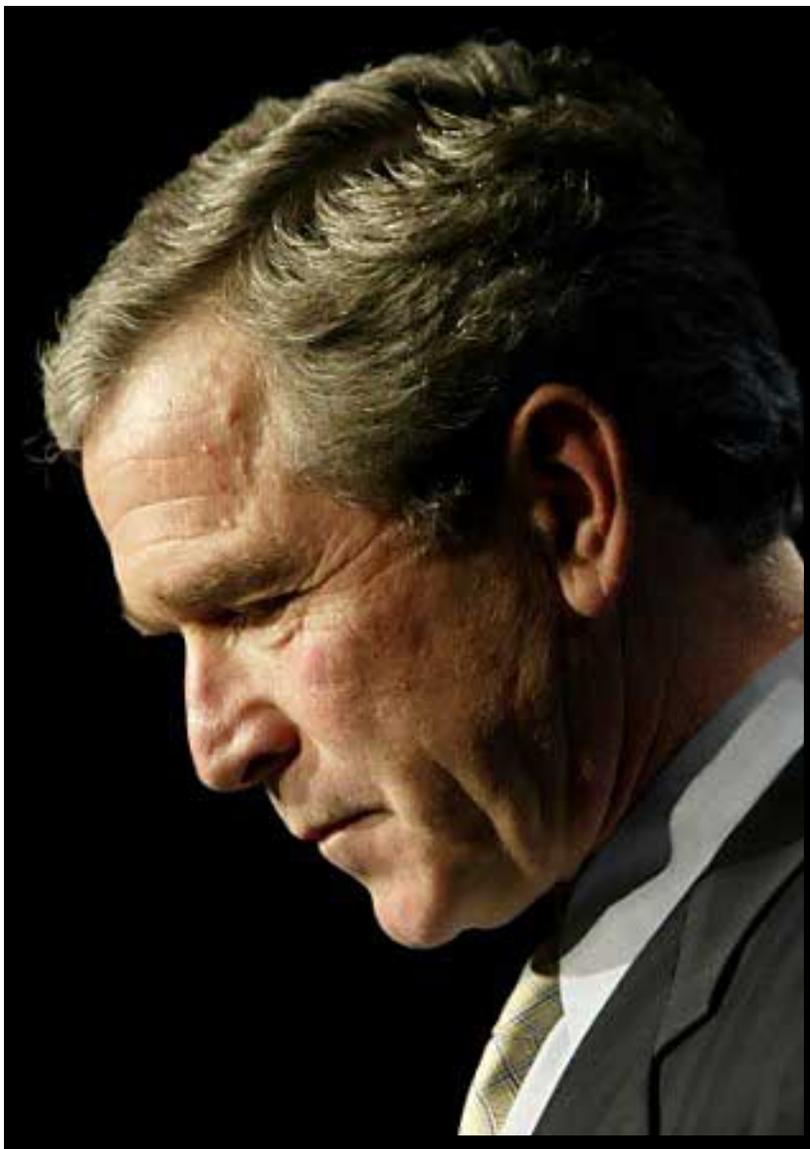


**Melchor Romero**  
in LaPalma



**Iver Valencia**  
in Jaque

# Pray for World Leaders



**George W. Bush, President of the United States of America**

“I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God’s mercy upon them, and give thanks. Pray this way for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we can live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message that God gave to the world at the proper time. And I have been chosen—this is the absolute truth—as a preacher and apostle to teach the Gentiles about faith and truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-7).



**Dick Cheney**  
US Vice President



**Jose Aznar**  
Spain



**Hamid Karzai**  
Afghanistan



**Condoleezza Rice**  
US National Security Advisor



**Vladimir Putin**  
Russia



**Gerhard Schroder**  
Germany



**Colin Powell**  
US Secretary of State



**Jacques Chirac**  
France



**Mireya Moscoso**  
Panama



**Donald Rumsfeld**  
US Secretary of Defense



**J. M. Barroso**  
Portugal



**Jean Chretien**  
Canada



**Tony Blair**  
United Kingdom



**Ariel Sharon**  
Israel



**Vicente Fox**  
Mexico



**Sadaam Hussein**  
Iraq



**Mahmoud Abbas**  
Palestine



**Jiang Zemin**  
China



# Conclusion





# The Journey Continues

90 minutes of prayer can quickly pass. As we conclude this time of prayer we have a decision to make. What do we do when we leave? Do we return to the harried pace of our lives, allowing time with God to be squeezed out of our day? Or do we commit to a new journey of spending time with God in the quiet each day.

## A Quote to Consider

The goal of simplicity is communion with God, what Thomas á Kempis referred to as “spiritual contemplation.” Since spiritual contemplation is largely a lost art in today’s busy culture, we need to be reminded that spiritual truths, when first birthed, are fragile. A busy mind will choke them out as surely as weeds choke flowers. Francis de Sales wrote, “After prayer, be careful not to agitate your heart, lest you spill the precious balm it has received. My meaning is, that you must, for some time, if possible remain in silence, and gently remove your heart from prayer to your other employments; retaining, as long as you can, a feeling of the affections which you have conceived.”

When we charge from our prayer into the glare of diversion, we crush the small blossom God has given us for the day. The precious truths, entrusted to us by God Himself, are carelessly discarded and soon resemble dirty roses lying crushed in the middle of the street.

Rise slowly, with reverence, and keep your eye trained on God’s face.

From *Seeking the Face of God* by Gary Thomas

## A New Beginning

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him” (Mark 1:16-20).

Drop your nets. Follow Him.