

Introduction:

It seems that everything in us is longing for a “return.”

- A return to normal.
- A return to life before COVID.
- A return to gatherings with family and friends.
- A return to church.
- A return to God.

In Jeremiah 6:16a (NIV), we read:

This is what the Lord says: *“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

As your spiritual leaders at The Way, we’d suggest that as the Lord says, we are standing at a “crossroads” in human history. This deep longing for “return” in our world opens a door for ministry to our aching world. In this verse, God calls his people to walk “the ancient paths” and that when we “...walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Prayer and fasting are two of “the ancient paths.” For the next 21 days, beginning Sunday, August 8th to Saturday August 28th, we will walk on these paths. In the pages that follow, we provide you daily prayer scriptures to ponder and reflect on with prayer prompts for connecting, cultivating, and caring both within our faith community AND throughout the community in which God has placed us to be His witness.

In the 1700’s, John Wesley and the early Methodists, developed a discipline called the “Wesley Fast.” Once a week, they would fast for a little less than 24 hours, from after dinner until the evening meal on the next day, which meant skipping breakfast and lunch. We want to invite you to practice the Wesley Fast from after dinner on Wednesday until dinner on Thursday night.

TO CONNECT: With God and Others

Sunday, Aug 8th - 1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV)

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer prompt:

Thank God for his faithfulness in your life and for those who have led you to Christ. And pray for the one that you are being called to witness too.

Monday, Aug 9th - Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Prayer prompt:

Pray that we, as God's followers, do not neglect one another as we are stronger together than apart.

Tuesday, Aug 10th - Acts 2:42-44;46-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All believers were together and had everything in common. . . Every day they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved.

Prayer:

Oh Merciful God, Because of COVID 19 we have become so accustomed to gathering around the TV for Sunday Morning Church. While this was necessary for many months, many of us are now choosing to stay away from gathering in person to worship. Satan has dulled our desire for fellowship with others and continues to convince us that gathering in groups is not safe or necessary.

Oh Holy Father, Let today's scripture from the book of Acts be a reminder of the importance of community. Renew our desire for gathering together to worship corporately because it is when we are together our faith is strengthened, we find hope, love, care and You Our Mighty Savior. In the name of Jesus, we pray these things.

Wednesday, Aug 11th - Acts 20:28

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the holy spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood.

Prayer:

Father God we come to you, we worship and praise you. Be with us Holy Spirit as we become the church you want us to be. Let our hearts be open and our spirits be willing to be your church with shouts of adoration and thankfulness for your sacrifice. Let us connect with others through your love. Revive us holy spirit let your light shine through us. Let your praises ring from our hearts. In Jesus holy name. Amen

Invitation:

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Thursday, Aug 12th - Psalms 46:10

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God will remind us in the stillness that He alone is the Creator God. May we be reminded today in our prayer time of the awesomeness of the One who not only created us but redeemed us as well.

Friday, Aug 13th - Psalms 25:8-9

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore, He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble His way.

Prayer:

Our Dear Father, we love you and thank you for blessing us. We are sorry for our sins against you and your children and ask for your forgiveness yet again in Jesus' name. You have all the glory for the work done toward making room for others. Show us how to share our blessings. Open our hearts and minds so we will know your plan and follow it. Your will be done, not ours, so we can know your perfect peace. In the name of The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Saturday, Aug 14th - Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God will enable us to continuously seek to do His will. Whenever we get distracted by the things of this world, may we remember to quickly turn back to Him in prayer, seeking His ways.

TO CULTIVATE: Our Faith and the Faith of Others

Sunday, Aug 15th - Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God will continue to open our minds and hearts to see how He would have us respond to the world around us. May we fully trust our lives to Him and walk in take the narrow gate.

Monday, Aug 16th - Matthew 18:19-20

Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Prayer prompt:

Pray thanking God for the power of prayer especially when we pray collectively as a group.

Tuesday, Aug 17th - Romans 15:4

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

Prayer:

Father our prayer is that your will be done through the small groups and Bible studies that we have now and in the future. Take these gatherings and multiply our efforts as only you can. Steer our intentions to align with your righteous will. Remind us of your faithfulness when our efforts fail or we fall short. May all glory be given to you when we receive the hope from the encouragement of your word. Keep love at the forefront of our minds and that your guiding light be with us, for all we set out to accomplish and celebrate. In Jesus name. Amen.

Wednesday, Aug 18th - Colossians 3:16

Let the words of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him...

Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, we praise you and thank you for your Word which serves as a guide and compass for Christian living. Thank you for the many opportunities that we have before us, at the Way, to come together in communities to study your word and write

them in our hearts. Father thank you for those who have come forward to serve as teachers and facilitators. Give them wisdom and knowledge as they teach the groups. May these opportunities for study and prayer be times of reflection, enlightenment and growth in your word. May these communities become opportunities for friendship, fellowship, spiritual growth, and a deepening of faith for all. In the name of Jesus, we pray this prayer.

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Thursday, Aug 19th - 2 Thessalonians 1:3

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

Prayer prompt:

How is your faith growing? Are you too comfortable or do you need to be encouraged? Pray that your spirit is nudged for your faith to grow abundantly.

Friday, Aug 20th - 1 Corinthians 2:9

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.

Prayer Prompt:

Pray that God will remind us that nothing is too hard for Him. Miracles happen every day. Big miracles, little miracles and everything in between. Pray that we will be open to experience His miracles every day.

Saturday, 21st - 1 Peter 2:2-3

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Prayer prompt:

Pray that your spirit may be fed the goodness of the Lord through worship and study with other members of the body.

TO CARE: For others, including one another

Sunday, Aug 22nd - James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Prayer:

Loving and Almighty God, thank you for the amazing gift of prayer and the ways you move through it. Please use us, your church at The Way, to reach our surrounding community to expand their perception of you and to advance your Kingdom. Help us be your light, your witness, your hands and your feet.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Monday, Aug 23rd - Ephesian 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Prayer:

Please Lord help me to be what you would have me to be. That I am able to help others and know that I am able to do it because you are there for me. May the praise and glory be on you for you have shown us the way to help others.

Tuesday, Aug 24th - Exodus 17:12

When Moses hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up-one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady until sunset.

Prayer:

Father God, as your word tells us Moses needed help and Aaron and Hur helped him. I pray that you will give us a heart for those who have less, so that we feel the need to do your work. I pray that we can lift the underprivileged and suffering, that we can touch lives that need you, let your love and hope be shown through us. Our mission is to go, show and tell the world about you Lord. Bless us as we strive to do your will. May we be filled with compassion for all your people. In your holy name. Amen

Wednesday, Aug 25th - Romans 10:13-15

And it is true: "Everyone who calls on the Lord's name will experience new life." But how can people call on him for help if they've not yet believed? And how can they believe in one they've not yet heard of? And how can they hear the message of life if there is no one there to proclaim it? And how can the message be proclaimed if messengers have yet to be sent?

Prayer:

Most Gracious Heavenly Father, raise up among us those whom you are calling to reach-out to serve and minister to the forgotten, the marginalized, those who are dependent on others for care who live among us or in places around the world.

Father, we praise you and thank you for those within our church body who have taken advantage of opportunities that The Way has given us to reach out and serve in our community. You have gifted us with talents for the purpose of serving your kingdom yet many still sit helplessly on their hands declaring that they lack the ability to serve. Our scripture today asks the poignant question, "how can they believe in one they've not heard of?"

Lord, open our eyes to see the needs around us. Fill our hearts with compassion and a willingness to step forward. Reassure us that You are there ready to guide us. Lord give us the desires of your heart to bless those around us and in doing so, our cup will be filled.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior we pray these things.

Invitation:

We want to invite you to practice the Wesley Fast from after dinner on Wednesday until dinner on Thursday night (forgoing breakfast and lunch).

Thursday, Aug 26th - John 13:34-35

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Prayer prompt:

Ask God to help us to love as he loves, that he forgives us for the judgmental attitudes and the pride we have. We need the Lord Jesus to immerse us in his love so that it might overflow from us to others.

Friday, Aug 27th - Galatians 6:9-10

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Prayer prompt:

Pray that our hearts may be opened to the opportunities we have to do a small kindness for someone.

Saturday, Aug 28th - Hebrews 13:1,2 (TPT)

No matter what, make room in your heart to love every believer. And show hospitality to strangers, for they may be angels from God showing up as your guest.

Prayer:

Most Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for the vision that you have planted in the hearts of our leaders and congregation to reach out to our community in love. Grant us the gift of hospitality to welcome all who come through the church doors. Give us the wisdom and guidance to discern how to best meet the needs of the young as well as the old that will be pleasing to you. Grant us your peace as we come together as a church community to discuss how to best move forward. Thank you, Lord, for giving us this opportunity to serve your community in love. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

TEACH ME TO PRAY!

Ever struggled with prayer? Ever questioned why to pray, who am I to pray to, what am I to pray for, and how do I begin to pray? Beginning October 10th, we revisit the prayer Jesus taught his very first disciples when they asked him to teach them to pray, The Lord's Prayer. We hope these reflections on the Lord's prayer will help us all deepen our understanding, our appreciation, and our desire to be in prayer with and to God.

Living into God's Vision for Our Community:

Our Missional Mandate (Our Mission):

The Way Woodstock exists to glorify God and make disciples by sharing the hope-filled life in Christ with others, so that we may all discover and live into our God-given purpose.

Our Missional Motives (Our Values):

- Grounded in God's Word *2 Timothy 3:16-17*
- Guided by God's Spirit *John 16:13*
- Growing Deeper in Faith *Romans 12:2* Going
- Further for Others *Galatians 6:1*

Our Missional Map (Our Strategy):

- Connect with God and with people
- Cultivate our faith and others
- Care for others, including one another

Our Missional Marks (Our Measures):

How are we doing in living out our mission? Collectively and individually we ask ourselves these four questions:

- How am I sharing the hope in Christ with others? *Romans 15:13*
- How am I discovering and living into my God given purpose? *Jeremiah 29:11*
- Who is helping me grow in my faith? *Philippians 1:6*
- Who am I helping to grow in their faith? *Hebrews 10:24-25*

