



Begin the Journey

with the

# Daily Office

Remembering God's Presence  
Throughout the Day

PETER SCAZZERO

Daily Offices  
Week One

The Problem of Emotionally  
Unhealthy Spirituality



## Week One

### The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality

## Day 1 — Morning/Midday Prayer

*Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

### Scripture Reading — Mark 11:15–17

*On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”*

### Devotional

Jesus’ intense anger and overturning of tables in the temple courts ought to make us gasp. He knows that if we don’t get to God, invaluable treasures will be lost or obscured. We lose the space where we experience God’s unfailing love and incredible forgiveness. We lose an eternal perspective on what is important and what is not. We lose compassion. We gain the world but lose our souls (Mark 8:36–37).

*Be Free For God*

I have a need  
of such clearance  
as the Savior effected in the temple of Jerusalem  
a riddance of clutter  
of what is secondary  
that blocks the way  
to the all-important central emptiness  
which is filled  
with the presence of God alone.<sup>4</sup>

— Jean Danielou



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#### Question to Consider

How would you describe “what is secondary” in your life, the thing that might be “blocking the way” to experiencing God?

#### Prayer

LORD, help me to see how much I lose when I lose you. My perspective on my life and all of life gets distorted when I don't make space for you, obscuring your love for me. Your love is better than life and, truly, I long for more tastes of that love. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*



## Day 1 — Midday/Evening Prayer

*Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

#### Scripture Reading — 1 Samuel 15:22–23

*But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”*

#### Devotional

Saul, the first king of Israel, did not know much about silence or listening to God. Like David, he was gifted, anointed, and a successful military/political leader. Yet we never see him seeking to be with God like David. In this passage, Samuel the prophet reprimands Saul for doing



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many religious acts (i.e. offering burnt offerings and sacrifices) but not quieting himself enough to listen, or “to heed” God (v.22).

We all must take the time to be silent and to contemplate, especially those who live in big cities like London and New York, where everything moves so fast . . . I always begin my prayer in silence, for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is the friend of silence – we need to listen to God because it’s not what we say but what He says to us and through us that matters. Prayer feeds the soul – as blood is to the body, prayer is to the soul – and it brings you closer to God. It also gives you a clean and pure heart. A clean heart can see God, can speak to God, and can see the love of God in others.<sup>5</sup>

– Mother Teresa

#### **Question to Consider**

How could you make more room in your life for silence in order to listen to God?

#### **Prayer**

De-clutter my heart, O God, until I am quiet enough to hear you speak out of the silence. Help me in these few moments to stop, to listen, to wait, to be still, to allow your presence to envelop me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*





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### The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality

## Day 2 — Morning/Midday Prayer

### *Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

#### **Scripture Reading — Jonah 1:1–4**

*The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”*

*But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD .*

*Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.*

#### **Devotional**

Jonah is an example of a prophet with a case of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. He hears and serves God but refuses to listen to God’s call to love and show mercy to Nineveh, a world power of that day known for its violent, barbaric behavior. Jonah flees 2400 miles in the opposite direction, to Tarshish, in present day Spain.

And why Tarshish? For one thing, it is a lot more exciting than Nineveh. Nineveh was an ancient site with layer after layer of ruined and unhappy history. Going to Nineveh to preach was not a coveted assignment for a Hebrew prophet with good references. But Tarshish was something else. Tarshish was exotic. Tarshish was adventure . . . Tarshish in the biblical references was a “far off and sometimes idealized port.” It is reported in 1 Kings 10:22 that Solomon’s fleet of Tarshish fetched gold, silver, ivory, monkeys and peacocks . . . In Tarshish we can have a religious career without having to deal with God.<sup>6</sup>

— Eugene Peterson



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As Jonah runs, however, God sends a great storm where he loses control of his life and destiny. He is thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish. It is from the belly of the fish that Jonah begins to wrestle with God in prayer.

#### **Question to Consider**

What internal or external storm might God be sending into your life as a sign that something is not right spiritually?

#### **Prayer**

LORD, may your will, not my will, be done in my life. You know how easy it is to call myself a Christian and become busy, forgetting about your will and desires. Forgive me for this sin. Help me listen to you and grant me the courage to faithfully surrender to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*



## Day 2 — Midday/Evening Prayer

*Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

#### **Scripture Reading — 1 John 2:15–17**

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*



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#### Devotional

At the end of the third century in the deserts of Egypt, North Africa, an extraordinary phenomenon occurred. Christian men and women began to flee the cities and villages to see God in the desert. They discerned how easy it was to lose one's soul in the entanglements and manipulations found in society, so they pursued God in a radical way by moving to the desert. They became known as the Desert Fathers.

They saw the world:

. . . as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life. . . These were men who believed that to let oneself drift along, passively accepting the tenets and values of what they knew as society, was purely and simply a disaster . . . They knew they were helpless to do any good for others as long as they floundered about in the wreckage. But once they got a foothold on solid ground, things were different. Then they had not only the power but even the obligation to pull the whole world to safety after them.<sup>7</sup>

#### Question to Consider

How do you hear the words of the apostle John today: *“Do not love the world or anything in the world”* (1 John 2:15)?

#### Prayer

LORD, I need you to show me how to “create a desert” in the midst of my full, active life in order to be with you. Cleanse me from the pressures, illusions, and pretenses that confront me today that my life may serve as a gift for those around me.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*





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## Day 3 — Morning/Midday Prayer

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading — Genesis 32:22–26, 30

*That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

*So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."*

#### Devotional

Jacob's name can mean "cheat," or "grabber," and he lives up to his name. He is manipulative, deceptive and aggressive — not someone who could qualify as a well-scrubbed member of First Church. Jacob is a seriously flawed person growing up in a dysfunctional family. He seems to be either getting into trouble or just getting out of it or about to make some more.<sup>8</sup>

Jacob's story is so universal because it is so personal. Throughout his life, Jacob has been stubborn and unwilling to trust anyone — even God. It is at the Jabbok Brook that Jacob is finally broken by God and radically transformed. He is given a new name and a new freedom to live as God originally intended. This comes, however, at the price of a permanent limp that now renders him helpless and desperate to cling to God. And it is out of this weak place of dependence that Jacob becomes a nation (Israel) in order to bless the world.

In the same way God, sometimes, wounds us in our journey with him in order to move us out of an unhealthy, "tip of the iceberg" spirituality



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to one that truly transforms us from the inside out. When these come, we can deny them, cover over them, get angry with God, blame others, or, like Jacob, we can cling desperately to God.

#### **Question to Consider**

In what way(s) has God put your life or plans “out of joint” so that you might depend on him?

#### **Prayer**

Father, I relate to Jacob in striving, manipulating, scheming, denying, and spinning half-truths to those around me in order to get my way. At times, I too find myself serving you in order to get something from you. LORD, I invite you to teach me to live in dependence on you. Help me rest and be still in your love alone. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*





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## Day 3 — Midday/Evening Prayer

*Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

### Scripture Reading — Matthew 16:21–23

*From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.*

*“Never, LORD!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*

### Devotional

The apostle Peter had a flaming heart for Jesus but rash, proud, he was also immature and inconsistent. His impulsiveness and stubbornness are evident throughout the gospels. Yet Jesus patiently leads him to an internal crucifixion of his self-will in order that he might experience genuine resurrection life and power.

When I am still, compulsion (the busyness that Hilary of Tours called “a blasphemous anxiety to do God’s work for him”) gives way to compunction (being pricked or punctured). That is, God can break through the many layers with which I protect myself, so that I can hear his Word and be poised to listen . . .

I can mistake the flow of my adrenaline for the moving of the Holy Spirit; I can live in the illusion that I am ultimately in control of my destiny and my daily affairs . . .

French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal observed that most of our human problems come because we don’t know how to sit still in our room for an hour.<sup>9</sup>

— Leighton Ford



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#### Question to Consider

What might be one way your “busyness” blocks you from listening and communing intimately with the living God?

#### Prayer

LORD, forgive me for running my life without you today. I offer my anxieties to you now – as best I can. Help me to be still, to surrender to your will, and to rest in your loving arms. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*



## Day 4 — Morning/Midday Prayer

*Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

#### Scripture Reading— Luke 10:38–42

*As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the LORD’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “LORD, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”*

*“Martha, Martha,” the LORD answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”*



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#### Devotional

Mary and Martha represent two approaches to the Christian life.

Martha is actively serving Jesus, but she is missing Jesus. She is busy in the “doing” of life. Her life is pressured and filled with distractions. Her duties have become disconnected from her love for Jesus. Martha’s problems, however, go beyond her busyness. I suspect that if Martha were to sit at the feet of Jesus, she would still be distracted with everything on her mind. Her inner person is touchy, irritable, and anxious.

Mary, on the other hand, is sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. She is “being” with Jesus, enjoying intimacy with him, loving him, and taking pleasure in his presence. Her life has one center of gravity — Jesus. I suspect that if Mary were to help with the many household chores, she would not be worried or upset. Why? Her inner person has slowed down enough to focus on Jesus and to center her life on him.

Our goal is to love God with our whole being, to be consistently conscious of God through our daily life — whether we are stopped like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, or active like Martha, taking care of the tasks of life.<sup>10</sup>

#### Question to Consider

What things are “worrying” and “upsetting” you as you begin this day?

#### Prayer

Help me, O LORD, to be still and wait patiently for you (Psalm 37:7). I offer to you each of my anxieties and worries this day. Teach me to be prayerfully attentive and to rest in you as I enter into the many activities of this day. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*



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## Day 4 — Midday/Evening Prayer

*Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

### Scripture Reading — Psalm 62:5–8

*Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;  
my hope comes from him.*

*He alone is my rock and my salvation;  
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.*

*My salvation and my honor depend on God;  
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.*

*Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your hearts to him,  
for God is our refuge.*

### Devotional

David, a man after God's own heart, beautifully models the seamless integration of a full emotional life with a profound contemplative life with God. He trusts in the LORD, pouring out his struggles, fears and anguish over the lies being said about him.

In *The Cry of the Soul*, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman summarize why awareness of our feelings is so important to our relationship with God.

Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God . . . Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice . . . However, we often turn a deaf ear — through emotional denial, distortion, or disengagement. We strain out anything disturbing in order to gain tenuous control of our inner world. We are frightened and ashamed of what leaks into our consciousness. In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.<sup>11</sup>



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#### Question to Consider

What are you angry about today? Sad about? Afraid of? Pour out your response before God, trusting in him as David did.

#### Prayer

LORD, like David I often feel like a leaning wall, a tottering fence that is about to be knocked down! So many forces and circumstances seem to be coming against me. Help me LORD to find rest in you and to take shelter in you as my fortress. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)



## Day 5 — Morning/Midday Prayer

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading — John 7:3–8

*But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." For even his own brothers did not believe in him.*

*Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come."*

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#### Devotional

Jesus moved slowly, not striving or rushing. He patiently waited through his adolescent and young adult years to reveal himself as the Messiah. Even then, he did not rush to be recognized. He waited patiently for his Father's timing during his short ministry. Why is it then that we hate "slow" when God appears to delight in it? Eugene Peterson offers us at least two reasons:

***I am busy because I am vain.*** I want to appear important. What better way than to be busy? The incredible hours, the crowded schedule, and the heavy demands of my time are proof to myself and to all who will notice – that I am important. If I go into a doctor's office and find there is no one waiting, and I see through a half-open door the doctor reading a book, I wonder if he's any good.

Such experiences affect me. I live in a society in which crowded schedules and harassed conditions are evidence of importance, so I develop a crowded schedule and harassed conditions. When others notice, they acknowledge my significance, and my vanity is fed.

***I am busy because I am lazy.*** I let others decide what I will do instead of resolutely deciding myself. It was a favorite theme of C. S. Lewis that only lazy people work hard. By lazily abdicating the essential work of deciding and directing, establishing values and setting goals, other people do it for us.<sup>12</sup>

#### Question to Consider

What is one step you can take today to slow down and live more attentively to the voice of Jesus today?



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#### Prayer

LORD, grant me the grace to do one thing at a time today, without rushing or hurrying. Help me to savor the sacred in all I do, be it large or small. By the Holy Spirit within me, empower me to pause today as I move from one activity to the next. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*



## Day 5 — Midday/Evening Prayer

*Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)*

#### Scripture Reading — 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the LORD to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

#### Devotional

The Bible does not spin the flaws and weaknesses of its heroes. Abraham lied. Hosea's wife was a prostitute. Peter rebuked God! Noah got drunk. Jonah was a racist. Jacob lied. John Mark deserted Paul. Elijah burned out. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal. Thomas doubted. Moses had a temper. Timothy had ulcers. Even David, one of God's most beloved friends, committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered

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her husband. Yet all these people send the same message: that every human being on earth, regardless of their gifts and strengths, is weak, vulnerable, and dependent on God and others.<sup>13</sup>

The pressure to present an image of ourselves as strong and spiritually “together” hovers over most of us. We feel guilty for not measuring up; for not making the grade. We forget that all of us are human and frail.

The apostle Paul struggled with God not answering his prayers and his “thorn in the flesh.” Nevertheless, he thanked God for his brokenness, knowing that without it, he would have been an arrogant, “conceited” apostle. He learned, as we all must, that Christ’s power is made perfect only when we are weak.

#### **Question to Consider**

How might brokenness or weakness in your life today present an opportunity for God’s power to be demonstrated?

#### **Prayer**

Father, the notion of admitting to myself and to others my weaknesses and failures is very difficult. LORD, I am weak. I am dependent on you. You are God and I am not. Help me embrace your work in me. And may I be able to say, like Paul, “when I am weak (broken), then I am strong.” In Jesus’ name, amen.

*Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)*

