

We are inviting you to participate with us in this prayer experiment between now and Labor Day. We're not looking for anything in particular. There is no way to do this wrong! We just want to see what may shift if we simply pray the scriptures together... trusting the Trinity to do what only they can do... and understanding that the process might be fully of messy grace. It's an experiment... and there is no way to fail. 😊

A Way to Pray (Adapt as is Best for You!)

- Ask God to help you become aware of your thought/behavior patterns.
- When you notice (and you will) that you are thinking/behaving in some way that is negative... STOP for a moment and be aware of what you are telling yourself... what you are believing in that moment.
- Don't condemn yourself. Don't try to fix anything. Just notice it.
- Continue doing this until you get a sense of what the pattern is... what is the "story" or set of assumptions/expectations underlying this old story (such as: old programming from childhood, a painful experience, "bad" theology, fear, shame, etc.). I noticed that although I knew in my head that I didn't have to be perfect... and have experienced LOTS of freedom from perfectionism... there were still layers of "un-truth" there causing lots of "un-freedom" in my relationship with God, myself, and others. I saw this because I caught myself saying things like "I'm a screw-up!" "Why can't I ever do anything right?" And there was the tension between what I know in my head, but not fully in my experience.
- Don't try to fix it yourself! Don't try to make the tension go away! Be gentle with yourself. Let yourself feel what you are feeling... and show it to God, asking for what you need. You might not know what you need. That's okay! Ask God to show you what God knows about this... what God thinks/feels about you... and for God's grace to keep you aware so you can cooperate with God's grace.
- And then live your life! When you notice that you are on "auto-pilot," caught in an old, negative pattern... don't fight it! Don't criticize yourself! Don't give it any power! Just see it... and then "lean" gently into what is truly true and really real about you and God.
- It helps to be prepared with some truth statements about who you really are, so that you don't have to feel anxious in the moment. We know these times will happen... so creating simple statements of truth about who you are in Christ can allow you to simply refocus... feel deeply the presence of God and the positive emotions this truth evokes in you... and move on!
- Create your I am statements based in scripture... and aligned with your old negative patterns. For example: If you struggle with thinking/feeling that you are not enough, you might think: *"On my own I am not enough (this is true!) YET in God's grace is more than enough for me. When I am weak, I am strong in Christ."*

Or, if you are afraid that you will not have enough, you might think: *"I feel afraid YET I am secure. God is providing for all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."*

Or if you feel unloved or abandoned, you might think: *“I feel unloved YET I am loved with an everlasting love... and nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate me from the love of God that in Christ Jesus my Lord.”*

Or if you feel like the worst sinner, you might think: *“I feel like such a sinner YET I am the righteousness of God in Christ!”*

You get the idea! This is very important... repeating the words isn't the point. Focusing on the reality they describe... and allowing yourself to feel that reality... even if only for a moment at a time... that's the point. Because that is what, over time, allows you to cooperate with the Spirit's ongoing process of transformation.

- You don't have to wait until you catch yourself in the tension to say what is true about yourself. Consider beginning each day by prayerfully remembering who you are in Christ.
- And, since Philippians 4 says to practice this refocusing prayer with thanks... you could end each day by briefly looking back with the Holy Spirit... and jotting down at least 3 things you are grateful for. Just bullet points. Not repeating things too often (We're always grateful for Jesus! Jot down a few things unique to that day. 😊)

And that's it! Simple, really... though not always easy. I can't explain to you how all of this works, I can only assure you that it does. I can't guarantee that things will change miraculously in a very short time (it might take quite some time), or that they will ever be perfect (never will happen on this side of eternity). BUT, I can tell you from my own experience that God will work all of this together with everything else in our lives... and will reveal more and more to us of what is already true, good, and abundant in this amazing life we have been given in Christ.

Let's keep the conversation going... and encourage one another... and most of all, let just stay present in the prayer process... and trust God to do all that is needed, and more. 😊