



A twelve-week guide to lean into the desire to pursue holiness – with a heart for God, and a shared **method**ology.

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# FMCI Rule of Life (March 1-May 31'21)

## The Bottom line: A 3-Month Covenant

The end goal is that as good Methodists we will lean into our desire to pursue holiness – with a heart for God, and a shared **methodology**. We understand that a Christ follower is already holy because God calls us holy, AND we are also to pursue holiness. The 3-month covenant is an opportunity for FMCI family to mutually encourage each other to establish a spiritual rhythm that helps us to pay attention to each other, to our community and most importantly, to God. A rule of life helps us to posture ourselves to be open to all that God would have to say to us, and be attentive to. The covenant that I am inviting you to is:

- Pray 3 times daily (morning, lunch, evening)
- Read, study, meditate, a common Scripture daily
- Half-day fast weekly
- Every other week 45- minute triad meeting
- Monthly Sunday PM national zoom meeting with Bishop (not a covenant obligation)

## The Covenant extends 3 months (March 1 – May 31):

- Each person chooses 3 daily times to stop and pray (morning, lunch and evening). We obviously are to learn to pray all day long, however, these 3 times are focused prayer opportunities shared with church family across Canada. Perhaps your daily spiritual rhythm will be morning worship, lunch petitionary or intercessory prayer, and then evening examen prayer. These may be 15-minute timeframes. I find it helpful, when I stop to pray at my desk, to journal my prayer as this helps me to concentrate on Jesus, rather than the office noises. Shift workers, stay home moms, firefighters, and many of us will need to be creative with how to make these times work into our days.
- Each week we will all read, study, meditate, memorize, and pray through a shared Scripture passage(s). We are encouraged to journal though I recognize that not everyone likes writing. A journal is not a diary, and I will provide some help with understanding how to journal. We commit to doing this daily – each person chooses their own best time and commits to this time daily. This should be a time without distractions, when you are still able to concentrate.
- Each person commits to meeting in a triad every other week for the duration of the 3 months. This 45-minute virtual meeting is simply to discuss the Scripture passages (what God might be saying to you and us), and pray together. I will provide resources (questions, discussion topics) to help you. I appreciate that this particular element may cause shy people or busy people to resist the covenant, however I urge you to try. Never has Canada needed a united Church community more than we do now. Loneliness, isolation, independence, mental health, have marked 2020, and this opportunity is one more way to confront these anti-God themes. You may choose to register as a triad, or simply trust that God has a good triad in mind for you! As Methodists meeting in small groups (class and band meetings) asking spiritual questions is a part of our heritage.
- Once a week, each person will commit to a half-day fast. This can be a fast from food, technology, or whatever would be a meaningful fast experience for you. You may choose a series of different

types of fasts throughout the 3 months. Resources helping you understand why we fast, how to fast, what to do in a fast will be provided;

- Once a month you will be invited to a 45-minute Sunday evening nation-wide virtual check-in meeting hosted by the Bishop (this is not a covenant requirement).

## Praying 3 Times Daily

I appreciate that you are learning to pray “without ceasing” as the Bible teaches. This particular challenge is to set up three times daily for focused prayer. The opportunity is also corporate in that you are roughly praying at the same time as your FMCIC brothers and sisters in Christ from across Canada!

**Morning prayer:** You chose your best time in the morning to set aside approximately 10-15 minutes daily. The morning prayer is to adoration. Thank God. Consider His attributes and praise Him. Use music, dance, art, quiet, walk, journal, run, kneel, sit, lay flat out on the ground... Try different postures in this morning prayer of adoration. Do not move into requests, but try to keep the morning session about praise.

**Midday prayer:** You chose your best time in the middle of the day to set aside approximately 10-15 minutes daily. The midday prayer is petition and intercession. It is you praying for God’s intervention in others or in circumstances. It is not your private or personal prayers, it is your prayer for FMCIC family and the Church in Canada and beyond. We will send you prayer requests. I encourage you to not simply bring a shopping list to God in prayer, and read out each item to Him. Intercessory prayer is more than listing prayer requests to God isn’t it? It is heart-fully representing these requests at the throne of Grace – which is the government of God. You are invited into His war-room, the place of government. Imagine if your member of parliament merely showed up at a parliamentary session and read off her requests? Somehow heart is required in intercession. There is also mystery involved. We do not know how God uses our words and transforms them into intervention in others, but amazingly He does. We need to approach the midday prayer with anticipation, awe, and heart. If you are able and have the time, find people to pray with.

**Evening prayer:** You chose your best time at night to set aside approximately 10-15 minutes daily. The evening prayer is “examen”. This is an ancient prayer of inviting God to search your heart (your day). It is the essence of the very first prayer in the Bible, where the Trinity asks Himself “is it good?” I mean, each creation day, God said that it was good, one day was not good and then another very good. In order for Him to decide that it was good or not good, He certainly asked Himself, “it is good?” When Jesus spoke with God it is called prayer in the Bible, so the “it is good” declarations in the creation story seem to come out of prayer. Daily God examined His day. I am inviting you to do likewise.

# The Daily Examen

By Pastor Rev. Jennifer Wagar, Barrie Free Methodist Church

This daily prayer, invites Jesus to meet with you to dialogue about your day... the blessings and joys, the frustrations and flounders, the wins and the sins. In His grace and love, you will see God's daily blessings, areas of growth and willfully decide to be intentional about doing better tomorrow, committing each day to walk closer to Jesus.

## **Step 1: Rest.**

Find a quiet place.

Scripture: *Psalm 46:10 – Be still and know that I am God.*

Pray: Father, You are welcome here... I know I that You love and care for me and You showed up in lots of places that I may not be aware of today... In this time ... protect it... may I be willing to hear Your voice and respond to Your goodness AND kind discipline!

## **Step 2: Rejoice.**

Make a list of things that made you smile, made other people smile... brought joy and warmth to your heart? What are you thankful for? I have learned that it is often the simple things that I forget to rejoice in... HOT coffee, a bird's song, an encouraging text, a windy day, the kind cashier. These are all blessings. Don't move on from this step until you find at least three joys! Then pause and thank God for those moments! You will come to see God's hand in the smallest things and in return you will experience how deep His love is for you!

Scripture: *Philippians 4:4 – Rejoice in The Lord always, I will say it again – REJOICE!*

Pray: *Thank you Lord for the many moments of joy that You gave me today!*

## **Step 3: Reflect.**

What is on your mind? What's troubling you? What was challenging? What or who did you avoid? Why? Did someone offend you? Did you offend someone? Do you need to forgive someone or ask for forgiveness? What sins of commission or omission did you commit today? Why are you sad? Depressed? Why am you feeling so lazy and lethargic? Where did you respond in fear or retaliate? Lay these thoughts before the Lord and ask Him what He thinks. Listen for scripture verses or promptings from the Holy Spirit. As you spend time with the Lord, you will come to discern the voice of the Lord (often quiet, but convicting and true but full of love that draws you closer to Him) verses Satan's (condemning, full of shame and guilt). After you're finished talking... pause and see if God brings anything up that you overlooked ☺

Pray this Scripture: *Psalm 139:24-25 - Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

<sup>24</sup>*See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

## **Step 4: Resolve**

Take what the Lord has revealed to you and follow it through... confess, forgive, make amends, receive truth where lies have been believed, ask for help to make better choices, for courage to overcome the fear, for strength to carry on. Share with a prayer partner if there's something that you might need help with.

Scripture: *James: 5:16 - Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

Pray: Father, I resolve with YOUR help to do better tomorrow. Thank you for the hope of a new day!

**Step 5: Rely on God**

Believe that God has heard your prayer... and still loves you. He will help you grow in these things because you asked and because He loves you.

Scripture: *Romans 8:38-39 - For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Pray: Thank you Father for Your love, Your forgiveness, Your presence and Your help.

# How to Triad

Let me start by acknowledging that the idea of meeting in a triad (3 people) does not necessarily bring joy to some of us. I understand. I also want to acknowledge that some of the triads may not go well. You might think now that with these two realities at play, why would I encourage us to meet in triads? The answer is that the potential good is worth it. Let me list the potential good:

- Strengthening the FMCIC & ultimately the Kingdom: you will meet people from across Canada who also love Jesus and happen to be FM'ers;
- Help you in your Rule of Life journey: you will have fellow Rule of Lifers cheering you on and holding you accountable to the covenant. There is a men's weight loss clinic commercial that ends with, "and remember men, if you could have done it on your own, you would have done it already!" Right!
- Jesus says that "where 2 or more are gathered in My Name, I will be there". Why did He say this? I mean of course, that He is already present when we are alone in prayer. Perhaps part of the answer is the Biblical meta-theme of community and Oneness with Christ (John 17). There is mystery here: mystery in the John 17 "one" and mystery in 2 or more statement. The Bible word "mystery" actually means "revelation", and not a secret that may never be discovered. The mysteries of God are gradually revealed, and one day we will "see clearly". As Free Methodist we embrace mystery, as we anticipate God's ongoing revelation. The triad is certainly another 2-or-more-gathered-in-His-Name opportunity.
- Hearing from God: we can hear from God in prayer, in Scripture and through others – a triad brings these three ways of hearing God together. I am asking that each week you would ask each other what stood out in the Scriptures you read and in your prayer times. I will be asking you to collect key words or thoughts that might pertain to FMCIC, because it is entirely possible that He could choose this 3-month covenant time to speak into the FMCIC.

A typical zoom-triad time may look like this:

- Introductions
- You may ask each other, "tell us about any thing that stood out in the Bible passages we studied this week"
- And then ask each other, "is there anything that you would like prayer for this week? Is there anything you are particularly praying for FMCIC?"

You may register with your own triad. By the way, if you have 4-5 people with whom you would like to do this with then in your case "triad"= 4-5! Otherwise I will form the triads. It will be your job as a triad to connect with each other and set your own zoom, or Facebook, or Teams, or whatever virtual platform you prefer.

# Triads: “How Do We Spend Our Time?”

By Rev. Dr. Doug Ward (Doug is a friend who helped me come up with this idea. He is running this in his Church)

This will evolve as time wears on and is somewhat dependent on chemistry of those involved and our own expectations.

**Raison d’etre:** The reason we do this is to build some natural community contact with others who are walking the same road. This is our normal pattern as believers – to walk with a few to hold fast to our faith, hear what God is about in our midst, and pray for one another.

**Time:** This will vary but for the average begin with 30 – 40 minutes and ramp things up from there. Each person can briefly check in with how they are doing at the moment and what may be playing out in their lives. This could include one highlight from the weekly readings (jot a few notes down as you go through the week), or an insight you garnered through silence or fasting. At the conclusion perhaps a prayer item from each person and someone to lead in prayer or pray for one another.

**Time - to reinforce:** Agree on a closing time at the beginning of the meeting. In my own world this is very important. It encourages us to watch the clock and make sure we have allowed everyone some equal space to speak and still honor other commitments that have been made. Please give group members permission to leave after the agreed upon period. If you want to stay and chat...great...but agree that it is alright to leave the meeting if you have some other commitment. This suggestion may sound harsh but over time will streamline your time, and deal with your expectations.

**Sharing:** “I’m not great at sharing or praying out loud.” Take a chance at this. It is alright to actually say that to your small group and lean into it gradually. For the more talkative folk in a group – ratchet back a little, or a lot, and make sure the conversation is balanced – drawing out some who are a little quieter. I know this can be a little intimidating but work at it as a group.

**Confidentiality:** The assumption is being made that confidentiality is maintained in the small group unless permission is granted to share some things with others. This may seem rather unnecessary for some but to allow for some honest reflection and a safe place for all of us this must be maintained. Small groups should always be “safe but not soft”. This allows people to grow in trust and deepen their relationships without any fear of sensitivities being violated.



# Week 1

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 51 & Luke 24:13-35

**Fast:** Read the “Why Fast?” article on the website. Choose a half-day fast.

**Schedule a triad time for next week. Read “How to triad?” and “Triads: How do we spend our time?”**

## The Case for Regular Bible Study

By Pastor Rev. Dan Jansen (Calgary)

No Christian would deny that consistent engagement with the Bible is important. After all, it is God’s primary communication to humanity. Why is it then, that many Christians struggle to make scripture a regular priority? Whatever the answer might be, Proverbs 1 and 2 can lead struggling Christians back into regular engagement with God’s Word.

Proverbs makes it clear that all wisdom is from God, saying, “the Lord gives wisdom, [and] from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding,” (Prov. 2:6). Moreover, this divine wisdom is readily available to everyone, as “Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts up her voice in the square . . . she cries out . . . [and] she utters her sayings” (Prov. 1:20-21). Contrary to popular belief, the wisdom of the Bible is not limited to matters of conversion, but speaks to every category of human life, including finances, marriage, parenting, friendships, work ethic, and more. When we fail to understand scripture this way, we suffer the effects of our foolish decisions. This is because all humans start out foolish, as Proverbs states, “there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to death,” (Prov. 16:25). As foolish people then, each Christian needs to accept the rebuke of God’s wisdom and “turn to [His] reproof,” (Prov. 1:23).

God’s wisdom starts out by saying, “You’ve got it wrong, I – the voice of wisdom – have it right, so admit this and turn to my way.” A sobering question the humble learner might ask then, is: “Could the difficulties that I am going through in my life right now be the result of the foolish way I have chosen without consulting the Word of God?” Fools don’t like this question. They won’t listen to the reproof of God’s wisdom because they “pay no attention to it,” (Proverbs 1:24). Such people will soon find themselves in their self-made distress and anguish (Prov. 1:26,27). They are living in hardship, not because of the oppression of others, but because of their foolish decisions. They are eating the “fruit of their own way,” (Prov. 1:31).

To make foolish decisions directed by one's own mind, without consulting the wisdom in God's Word, will lead to personal distress and anguish. In Proverbs 2, Solomon provides believers with the solution: Be people that go after God's word, because His wisdom is not granted passively. One can only obtain God's wisdom through active pursuit. This is described in 5 ways:

1. Receive His words of wisdom (Prov. 2:2).
  - a. One needs to listen to God's wisdom, trust it, believe it, receive it and apply it – God's guiding wisdom is not optional, it is vital to life!
2. Treasure His commands (Prov.2:2).
  - a. Deuteronomy 10:13 makes it clear that God's commands are for one's own good. They are to be treasured as His gift of a fulfilling life.
3. Be attentive to His wisdom (Prov. 2:2)
  - a. One needs to put themselves within eyesight (personal reading) and earshot (the church community) of the scriptures.
4. Cry out for wisdom and discernment (Prov. 2:3)
  - a. One needs to make it known in the marketplace of life that one is a seeker of God's wisdom!
5. Seek and search for wisdom as a hidden treasure (Prov. 2:4,5).
  - a. One must make the active pursuit of God's wisdom the quest of their life.

The blueprint for godly faith **and practice** does not come from within one's self, but from God's supernatural communication to people as found in His Word. If one chooses to neglect it, that person will live foolishly, according to their default, and will inevitably eat the fruit of their ways. If one seeks, treasures and embraces it, God's Word will accomplish its work in them (1 Thess 2:13), and that person will eat the fruit of His way, as He says, "If only you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your wellbeing would be like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea," (Isaiah 48:18).

## **“When You Fast...”**

By Rev. Ken Roth, National Prayer Team Leader

Why bother fasting? It is a major inconvenience, especially in this part of the world where we regularly get to eat at least 3 meals a day...and then there are snacks. My answer begins with asking you and myself, how hungry are we for God? Just fasting for the sake of some sense of duty or religious merit-earning will leave us feeling it a burden and empty. But, if we are desperate for a deeper relationship with God, or spiritual transformation, or insight into His purposes for us, fasting can be a means of grace.

### **To help us focus on seeking the face of God:**

It is clear that Jesus practiced this means of grace when He spent 40 days fasting before He began His ministry. He also implied that we could use it when He said, **“When you fast...” (Mt.6:16)**. I think the biggest reason for it is to help us focus on seeking the face of God, to know Him and become one with Him. At times I have fasted hoping for a spectacular experience of some kind, but what I have ended up with is a deeper knowing of God, a deeper knowing of myself and my entanglement with my fleshly desires, and an increased sensitivity to the leading of His Spirit in the days that followed. While Jesus was with His disciples they did not need to seek His presence in that way, but He told them that afterwards, **“when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.” (Mt.9:15)**.

### **To help humble our proud and rebellious hearts:**

Another reason for fasting is that it helps humble our flesh that wants to rule us. It is a way for us to take our cravings by the scruff of the neck and tell them that they must submit to our desire to please God. This is particularly helpful when we are confronting a sinful attitude or behaviour we have become aware of and we are having trouble overcoming. God told His people to return to Him, **“with fasting and weeping and mourning” (Jl.2:12)**. That sounds a lot like what James said: **“Wash your hands , you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.” (Jm.4:8-10)**.

### **To help receive guidance from the Lord:**

As Daniel was fasting, praying and seeking God for understanding of the times they were in, an angel was sent to tell him: **“Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.” (Dn.10:12)**. I find this story very encouraging to me because it reveals to me that it means something to God when we get earnest in our prayers. I think that was what happened when the church leaders in Antioch **“were worshiping the Lord and fasting”**. It was then that **“the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’.” (Ac.13:2)**. And that guidance changed the world.

### **How should we fast?**

This is something that is very personal and can take many forms. I know people who have done 40 day fasts, some who have done Daniel fasts (21 days without eating meat, choice foods, dinking stimulants), some have done 7 day fasts with only vegetable juices, some doing 3 day fasts of no food or water. What we are encouraging ourselves to do for the 3 months leading up to General Conference is to fast for half a day per week. That could involve not eating from the time you go to bed until supper time the next day, or from 7pm to 7am. Or if you find that too challenging at this time (some may suffer from diabetes) then ask the Lord how else you could deny yourself and free up some time to pray. That could mean not drinking coffee/tea, playing video games/social media, etc. Whatever you chose to do, do it as unto the Lord, so that it becomes something that He is leading you to do. During that time, you would read and pray into the Scriptures that will be provided to you throughout this time, with the goal of growing in holiness. Then you can share in your triplet what God is teaching you and even convicting you of.

# Week 2

Read the article “Praying 3 times daily”

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 42 & Luke 15

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Read “So what about a triad?” article on website. Be brave and *triad* approximately 45 minutes.

Before you end your meeting schedule the next meeting 2 weeks from now. Triad talking points:

- What stood out to you in the four passages (Psalms 51, 42, Luke 24:13-35, and 15)? What words, phrases or ideas stood out?
- Perhaps it is a literary technique that Luke uses by identifying only one of the disciples (Cleopas)? It is a technique used in Scripture to invite the reader to enter the story. Did you enter the story? Tell us about that experience.
- Luke 15 is a very important Bible chapter. Three times in a row Jesus focusses on the “lost”. What is He saying about the “lost” in this chapter?
- How can we turn these passages into prayers? What are the prayers in these passages that the Church can and should pray?
- Before we leave, we should pray – how can we pray for you?

## The Benefits of Journaling

By Pastor Rev. Ken Dryden, Salmon Arm

Journaling has been an indispensable discipline in my life as a follower of Jesus. If I were to recommend journaling to someone as a spiritual discipline, here are some of the ways it has enriched my walk with Jesus over the years. Journaling helps with ...

### FOCUSING

As I take a pen to paper it forces me to slow down and focus. To be like Mary and ponder some things in my heart. (Luke 2:19, 51). I am easily distracted and if I let myself, I can rush through times of reading scripture and prayer. Journaling facilitates a deeper meditation on the scriptures and engagement in prayer. Journaling helps me to be more fully present in those moments to the presence of God and the work of God in my life.

### PRAYING

It is hard for me to separate journaling and prayer. Times of writing in a journal become acts of prayer, engaging in an ongoing conversation with God. Sometimes the prayers I write are words I want to express

to the Triune God, often in response to what I have read in the scriptures. Other times I write words I sense God would speak to me. There are times when prayers just seem to tumble out onto the paper with no concern for grammar or spelling or logical construction - just the outpouring of my heart. Other times I am more careful to craft those words because I want to think more deeply and perhaps offer up to God something of beauty - in some small way reflective of the beauty I see in Him.

#### REMEMBERING

I have a short memory. If I don't capture things in my journal, they will likely be forgotten. In the act of writing things down, my memory of these significant things is enhanced. Journals are not the same as a diary, they are not just the record of what you did or what the weather was like that day. There are, however, significant moments in each of our lives when God is teaching us something and it's important to record them.

Once a year, between Christmas and New Years Day, I reflect on what I have written in my journal in the past year. I make note of significant themes and prayers. As I reflect on the movement of the Spirit in my life it always prompts thanksgiving and praise.

#### DIAGNOSING

There have been times when my journal has enabled me to do some significant work on my soul leading to repentance and change. I recognize something significant has happened in my life that day and I write it down. I ask myself some questions, similar to the Psalmist in Psalm 42 "Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? When I do this kind of work on my soul in cooperation with the Spirit, sometimes I can see what needs to be done. There are other times where I will take that issue and reflect further on it with a small group of friends or with a spiritual director. Having processed it in my journal first can be very helpful.

Journaling helps keep me honest. It doesn't need to be profound. I am not writing for the benefit of future generations. If I approach it that way I will want to edit, to make my best impression. Journaling should be honest - warts and all.

# Week 3

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 3 (pay attention to the *selahs*) & John 21:15-19

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Pray for your triad

## How to Listen to God

By Pastor Rev. Shelley Utz, Kamloops

From the first pages of Scripture to the last, God reveals himself as a communicating God. Jesus expected that his sheep would hear and know his voice (John 10:1-27). Listening to God's voice is an ability that can be learned and developed (1 Samuel 3:1-11).

Although there are many ways in which God speaks to people, God's preference is for the still small voice (1 Kings 19:12-13). See Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*, especially chapter 5.

**Here is a brief format for beginning to listen to God:**

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Choose a truth of Scripture (eg. The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice. Psalm 97:1) and let that truth focus your mind and heart.
2. Ask God to speak, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:9).
3. Listen, maintaining your focus and attention towards God. Set aside any distracting thoughts or feelings.
4. Write down any pictures, words, impressions that come to you, for further prayer and treasuring.

**How do I deal with distractions?** People struggle with distracted minds to the point of giving up listening to God, a problem heightened by electronics. Withdrawing from devices is essential to being able to listen to God. Turn your phone off during the time of listening, and if practicing the presence of your device is a problem for you, try fasting from it more regularly.

**How can I empty myself of my own thoughts to listen to God?** Christian meditation and listening to God are not about emptying but about being filled with God, His truth, by His Spirit. As distracting thoughts intrude, set them aside - the phone call you need to make, an errand that needs to be run - write them down, so that your mind can leave them alone. We might recognize strategies or schemes of the enemy in the distracting thoughts, lies about ourselves or others, fears, worries that we need to set aside to focus on God. Sometimes special prayer is needed for those in bondage to negative patterns. We will not be able to do this for long, at first, but a few minutes is good. With practice, we will grow in it.

**How do I distinguish my thoughts from God's speaking?** Is it me or is it God? Yes. God in us and we are in God. Through practice, we learn to recognize our own thought patterns and the different, sometimes surprising ways that God speaks. Scriptural safeguards include testing the spirits (1 John 4:1), seeking wisdom from the community of God's people (1 Cor 14:29). God might speak through bringing a Scripture verse, words addressed directly to you, or dropped into your mind as if they were your own thoughts, an awareness of someone to pray for, or a memory that God wants you to notice. The possibilities are as many as there are types of conversations. It may be something you don't understand, so ask God questions about it. What do you want me to notice about what you've shown me? Make it clear, Lord.

**Finally, persevere.** On any given day, we may hear nothing, we may be distracted, dull, uncertain, but making space for God to speak means that when He does speak, we are listening and can hear.

# Week 4

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCIC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 32 (pay attention the *selahs*) & John 13:1-17

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Be brave as you will only get out of a triad what you put in and *triad* approximately 45 minutes.

Schedule the next meeting 2 weeks from now. Talking points for your triad:

- What stood out to you in the four passages (Psalms 3, 32, John 21:15-19, 13:1-17)? What words, phrases or ideas stood out?
- Two very powerful Jesus events occur in these John passages. Tell us about your experience of Jesus as you meditated on these two historical events.
- Selahs are pauses (we think). They are rests in the Psalms that invite you to linger on the last section, before you move on into the Psalm. Did you stop and meditate on the thought before moving forward? Tell us about any selah moments that stood out.
- How are any of these Bible truths (Scriptures) relevant to us the Church today?
- How can we turn these passages into prayers? What are the prayers in these passages that the Church can and should pray?
- Before we leave, we should pray – how can we pray for you?

## The Power of Prayer

By Superintendent Ahmed Kenneth Quarshie, Free Methodist Church Ghana Mission

Prayer has been one of the most written or talked about topic in the cycles of faith mainly because, it is the only way a mortal (man) can communicate and relate with divinity (God). Per the topic, lets define **Power** and **Prayer**.

*Power is the ability or capacity to do, act, direct or influence something, behaviour or events in a particular way. (Search Dictionary)*

*Prayer is the conduit a mortal (man) uses to interconnect with divinity (God), for his or her continues relationship, existence and wellbeing. (Ahmed Kenneth Quarshie)*

On the premise of the above definition for power and prayer, I would like to share my experience with regards to prayer to prove the power of prayer. In the will of God, I got employed in Bible League Ghana in the year 2000 as a ministry coordinator. I went through the ranks to become the National Ministry Coordinator in 2008. In 2008, a new National Director was appointed to replace the then National Director who was promoted to be the West Africa director for Bible League.



Upon assumption of office of the new director, for whatever reason's only known to him, decided he would fire me from the organization. In pursuant to this in 2010, authorized his secretary to draft a letter for him on Tuesday to fire me on Friday. Which Friday coincided with a day and date in the same week I was to write my last paper in the university. The following day Wednesday, a colleague got hint of the conspiracy and hinted me about it, with just two days for me to be fired!

When I was told about the conspiracy, like the prophet Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1:1-4, I went on knees cried and prayed to the Almighty God. *Father Lord, I know you are aware of the conspiracy against me. I am convinced; I did not employ myself in your establishment. You did. If it is your will that I be fired, then let it be. But if it is not your will but the will of man without any justifiable cause, then let your will be done!*

As I prayed and cried in pain, suddenly, I felt a hand literary touched my right shoulder from the back, and a voice say to me, "*Ahmed, take heart, wipe your tears, wait and see what will happen*". After experiencing the touch of the hand and hearing the comforting words from the voice, suddenly, I experienced the promise of peace as stated in Philippians 4:6-7.

The following day Thursday, I went to the office and coincidentally, I met the director at gate. When we met, he said, Ahmed, I guess you are writing your last paper tomorrow Friday? I answered, yes director. He said, ok and left to his office. At the close of work, I told the colleague who hinted me of the conspiracy that, something would happen tomorrow Friday in this organization. But I do not know exactly what would happen.

The following day Friday, I went to write my last paper before going to the office. When I got to the office after writing my paper around 4pm, I noticed an unusual quietness in the office. I quickly went to the colleague who hinted me of the conspiracy and asked him, why is the office unusually quiet? Where is director? The colleague did not answer any of the questions I posed. I left him and went back to my office parked and left for home, wondering what could have happened to warrant the quietness I experienced in the office.

On Saturday the following morning around 8am, I received a call from the West Africa who asked me to meet him at the office for a meeting. I freshened up and went to the office. When the meeting commenced, the West Africa director said to me, your national director was fired yesterday Friday. The same Friday I was to be fired. The position has been given to you as directed by the International Office of the Bible League in Chicago Crete. Congratulations! Note: *I have been the national director for Bible League Ghana since 2010 to date 2021.*

This is how I experienced the power of prayer. Can anyone tell me there is no power in prayer? There is great power in prayer. A bomb has so much exploding power only to the extent that it is designated. So is prayer. Until it is exercised you will never experience its power.

I don't know what you might be going through right now, or for years. All I know is that, there is power in prayer. Commit your pain, worry, anxiety, plans, dreams, and aspirations to prayer before the Father, the maker and sustainer of all things in the name of Jesus Christ.

Remember! There is power in prayer. Prayer has the ability to change, direct and influence situations and events. The watchword is, PRAY AND PRAY!

# Week 5

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Isaiah 58 & Acts 2:41-47

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Pray for your triad.

# Week 6

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 63 & Matthew 19:16-30

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Be brave as you will only get out of a triad what you put in and *triad* approximately 45 minutes.

Schedule the next meeting 2 weeks from now. Talking points for your meeting time:

- What stood out to you in the four passages (Isaiah 58, Psalm 63, Acts 2, Matthew 19)? What words, phrases or ideas stood out?
- The Acts passage represents what the Church looked like for her first 25 years or so. Imagine out loud with each other, a Church that lived into the Isaiah, Acts and Matthew passages. Would the Church look differently? Explain your answers.
- What would have to happen in your life and in the way we do Church together, so the Canadian Church to look more like Acts 2?
- A poor reading of this verse would be that there was no membership, no organization. It was both relationally driven and organized. “They were added to the number” is in reference to a membership list that was kept, because the Church was the banking, welfare, unemployment insurance systems. Membership helped them care for each other, protect doctrine, and live into an organized movement as outlined by Paul.
- How can we turn these passages into prayers? What are the prayers in these passages that the Church can and should pray?
- Before we leave, we should pray – how can we pray for you?

# Week 7

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 7 & Luke 18:1-14

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Pray for your triad.

# Week 8

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 16 & Matthew 13:1-23

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Be brave as you will only get out of a triad what you put in and *triad* approximately 45 minutes.

Schedule the next meeting 2 weeks from now. Talking points for your triad time:

What stood out to you in the four passages (Psalms 7, 16, Luke 18 and Matthew 13)? What words, phrases or ideas stood out?

These are very important parables. Describe the main point of each parable.

God is not a nasty judge (Luke 18) and He loves His children choosing to come to Him day after day.

Describe the prayer life of the Church if it looked like the 2 parables in Luke. Without judging anyone else, is your prayer life anywhere near as gritty as the woman (by gritty, I mean of course, the absolute resolve that the judge is the only solution so she did not quit)?

The Pharisee was not trying to offend God with his prayer. So the question is, why did he pray that way?

How can we turn these passages into prayers? What are the prayers in these passages that the Church can and should pray?

Before we leave, we should pray – how can we pray for you?

# Week 9

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 19 & John 9

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Pray for your triad.

# Week 10

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7; Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 20:19-23

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Be brave as you will only get out of a triad what you put in and *triad* approximately 45 minutes.

Schedule the next meeting 2 weeks from now. Talking points for your triad:

- What stood out to you in the passages we read these 2 weeks? What words, phrases or ideas stood out?
- Let's take our time with John 9 as it is a long passage with much to say. When are the Pharisees? When are we the parents? Describe the journey Jesus brought this man on (from blindness to sight – literally and spiritually).
- John 20:19-23 “Jesus breathed” is actually written in the original language in the historical present verb tense: “Jesus breathes”. John used this tense in order to describe a historical event and state that Jesus continues this very action today. You are invited into the story in order to experience the breath of God. Discuss this.
- How can we turn these passages into prayers? What are the prayers in these passages that the Church can and should pray?
- Before we leave, we should pray – how can we pray for you?

# Week 11 (week of May 10<sup>th</sup>)

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Something a little different this week. Read each NAME for Jesus, meditate on it, pray it all day long. Use that NAME to address Him all day long in your meetings with Him. God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” (Exodus3:14). Jesus used these very words, “I AM WHO I AM”

- Monday: John 6:35,51
- Tuesday: John 8:12; 9:5
- Wednesday: John 10:7,9
- Thursday: John 10:11,14
- Friday: John 11:25
- Saturday: John 14:6
- Sunday: John 15:1,5

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Pray for your triad.



# Week 12 (week of May 17<sup>th</sup>)

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 146 & Revelation 1:12-18; 5

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Be brave as you will only get out of a triad what you put in and *triad* approximately 45 minutes.

Talking points for your triad time:

- What stood out to you in the four passages (Psalms 57, 146, Matthew 5 and Revelation 1 or 5)? What words, phrases or ideas stood out?
- How are any of these Bible truths (Scriptures), in particular the description of Jesus, relevant to us the Church today?
- How can we turn these passages into prayers? What are the prayers in these passages that the Church can and should pray?
- Be sure to send a note to Bishop Cliff to let us know about particular themes or verses or prayers that may be for the national Church.

# Week 13 (week of May 24<sup>th</sup>)

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Psalm 57 & Matthew 5:1-16

**Fast:** Choose a half-day fast.

**Triad:** Pray for your triad

**SUNDAY NIGHT CHECK IN WITH THE BISHOP:** Sunday May 30 at 7:00 PM EDT

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82194665506?pwd=b0toMG42ODBLZVF3WkpvcWFJWkJKGUT09>

Meeting ID: 821 9466 5506

Passcode: 203141

# Week 14 (week of May 31 – last week)

**Morning Prayer:** the focus of this time is adoration, thankfulness, praise & worship

**Mid-day Prayer:** the focus of this time is intercession, petitions, prayer for FMCiC

**Evening Prayer:** the focus of this time is examination for self

**Scripture:** Something a little different this week. Let's spend the week together with the prophet Malachi. Take a moment to read up on the what the book is about. You will see that it is a series of conversations God has with His people. He makes a statement about something that we are saying or doing and we respond (not well). Remember as you read to enter the Word (it is both a historical record and principles (truths) that continue to be important today. You are, according to 1 Peter 2:5, His people, a royal priesthood. Note that Malachi has a word for God's people and priests, and you are both.

- Monday: Malachi 1:1-5
- Tuesday: Malachi 1: 6-14
- Wednesday: Malachi 2: 1-9
- Thursday: Malachi 2: 10-16
- Friday: Malachi 2: 17-3:5
- Saturday: Malachi 3: 6-12
- Sunday: Malachi 3:13-18

**Triad:** Be sure in this last meeting to have prepared by reading, "How to end your triad well". Discuss the content of the article. If you have time discuss the readings for the past 2 weeks. Alternatively, have an email conversation regarding the passages.

# How to End Your Triad Well

You took a risk. The best risk I ever took was showing up for a blind date, and then the risk of calling her up the next day in order to ask her out for a second date – everything seemed to fall into place after that! Sometimes risks lead to beautiful things! For me it was Karlene!

I pray that the risk that you took in joining a triad has been a good thing. I have been praying that your investment into two other people's lives these past 11 weeks has been meaningful, and that you have equally received the gift of new or deeper friendships. Perhaps, however, it did not go well. If your triad was not life-giving, still you need to help bring it to closure. Why is closure or bringing your triad to an end important? Three reasons:

1. The alternative to closure is non-closure. The state of non-closure is a state of unresolved, perhaps even uncertain relationships. My question to those who do not choose to say goodbye, and choose to simply slip away from others, is “why do you resist healthy closure?”
2. It is an opportunity to give a new friend a blessing – literally the last meeting is a time to bring a blessing to the other 2 members of your triad. A blessing is a gift, promise or word from God to another person. It comes from deep listening to the Holy Spirit for another person, “Father, what would you have me bring to this person?” Once you are relatively confident that you have a gift, word or promise from God for someone, offer it to them humbly, “I have been praying for you and this came to mind \_\_\_\_”. The someone's responsibly is to receive this blessing and ask God (perhaps with trusted friends) if this is a blessing from Him to activate it in their life. A blessing is like prayer and evangelism. God does not need us for either of these, but He chooses to allow you to participate in His work, it is how much He values you! You are assigned the eternally important responsibility of praying for others, evangelizing and blessing. God is responsible to make the prayer work, evangelism effective and the blessing true, but we are bringers of these – again, this is how important you are to God! In your final triad meeting bring a blessing to your triad friends.
3. Closing one chapter is an opportunity to open a new one: What have I learned for next time? The self examination questions to consider, which could also be discussion items in your last meeting include:
  - Did this triad work? Why or why not?
  - Did I contribute to someone's life?
  - Did they receive from me the gift of friendship? Did I resist friendship?
  - What can I do better? What will I avoid?
  - What did I learn about myself?

What closure offers each person an opportunity to hear about the value of the time they have spent together. I once had a terrible experience at a restaurant – it involved uncooked chicken and very dim lighting. One bad experience has not led to me choosing to no longer eat out. I have however, met people who have had a bad experience in a small group tell me that they “will never attend another one”. Silly. Jesus was burned, betrayed actually, by a member of His small group, and yet Jesus' method to establish “Church” was a small group. He went so far as to say, “where two or more are gathered, I will be there”. Why did He say that, when we know He is available when we are alone? Simple: because He was highlighting the need to community, to meet in small group. Learn

from your triad experience, so to do it even better next time. I am not suggesting that Christians always need to be in a *triad*, but I am suggesting that Christians always need to be in some type of small group comprised of 2 or more believers. It's how Jesus did things.