

STILLNESS

A daily guide to prayer




IJM

STILLNESS

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I WILL MAKE BREATH
ENTER YOU, AND YOU
WILL COME TO LIFE.

E Z E K I A L 3 7 : 5

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning, IJM staff has gathered every day to pray. Why this pause for prayer in the middle of such urgent work? The IJM story is a prayer-story.

Like so many beautiful works, they are first conceived in the heart. In the space that only God sees and knows. These silent, undetectable ‘breath-prayers’ of the heart that once spoken, set a powerful God-breathed force into motion. Until that breath-prayer finally comes to life.

In the middle of dry bones, a field of human remains from the horrors of the Rwanda genocide, IJM’s founder Gary Haugen did a seemingly inconsequential thing. He asked a question of God that was a prayerful plea: *Where are you in this suffering?*

If we could be so bold as to liken that question to Ezekiel’s, when he’s standing in the valley of dry bones and the Lord asks him this puzzling question: *Can these bones live?* (Ez. 37:3).

Do you remember the story? Ezekiel rightly answers: *Only you know, Lord.* In other words, “I doubt that dead things can come to life, but you’re God, so...maybe?”

And God tells Ezekiel to do something extraordinary.

God tells him to open his mouth and *speak* to the bones: *I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.* (Ez. 37:5)

In one moment of conversation with God, Ezekiel has faith enough to speak to dead bones.

In the middle of that Rwandan graveyard of horror, Gary Haugen recounts how God met him in the midst of questions and doubts. This moment of conversation with God changed his question and his plea from *where is God*, to *where are God’s people?*

IJM was built on a foundation of conversation with God.

The first order of business at IJM's inception was to create space and priority for prayer. So before opening IJM's doors, Gary Haugen recruited one hundred prayer partners to undergird the work in prayer.

The first IJM Prayer Partner was a woman named Vera Shaw.

Outside of IJM's walls, she is little known. She did not receive the accolades of praise God has been so kind to bestow upon IJM over these many years, but Vera Shaw certainly walks the heavenly halls of fame.

She was Gary Haugen's mentor in prayer. A woman of prayer, dearly remembered but little known, planted those first seeds of intercession that have reaped a bountiful harvest.

There have since been thousands of IJM friends and prayer partners who have sowed seeds of prayer. In quiet places, largely unseen and unknown to anyone but their Maker, faithful intercessors have prayed for God's work of justice to bring freedom to many suffering people around the world.

And God has been faithful to answer.

IJM now celebrates its twentieth anniversary with hundreds of global staff, thousands of supporters and millions of people protected from violent injustice.

And it all began with hearts that cried out to God in prayer.

Our prayers—the quiet ones, seemingly insignificant ones, the lonely ponderings of our hearts before God—have great eternal significance.

Your prayers yield an impact that you could not begin to fathom.

Our hope is that you will lift your heart in prayer daily as you engage with this devotional.

How will you know what your prayers can accomplish unless you pray? **What dead and hopeless situations are you encountering that need a conversation with God?**

This devotional is an offering from the very heartbeat of IJM. It is an invitation to *daily pause for conversation with your God*.

There are seeds of intercession *in* you to impact your world *around* you.

**Pray for yourself.
Pray for your family.
Pray for IJM's staff & clients.
Pray for your community.**

**Pray As You Will.
But Pray.**

HOW TO USE

THIS DEVOTIONAL

This devotional was written with women of prayer in mind. You'll find throughout it the "prayer-stories" of the ordinary women who work at IJM, as well as examples of women in Scripture who inspire us to greater faith and courage. And hopefully you'll also find within their voices, your own "prayer-stories." Those places of calling and purpose that God is inviting you to grab a hold of in prayer, and the places where he's asking you to take small steps of faith and courage.

Each day, you'll be invited to enter into stillness. A brief guided reflection for you to settle into the daily devotional. IJM staff around the world begin each day with thirty minutes of stillness. It's actually referred to as 8:30 Stillness and kicks off the workday with individual reflection and quieting of our hearts before God. It is a simple practice to remember that the work of justice belongs to the God of Justice (and not to us!).

We hope you'll find this practice useful in your own life as well. Whatever is on your list of to-do's, whether it's family or work responsibilities, the invitation is to remember that God is able to rightly order your day as you pause to cast your cares upon him (1 Peter 5:7).

The daily devotionals draw inspiration each week from an anchoring passage of Scripture that is also an IJM family verse: Be joyful in hope, patient in afflic-

tion, faithful in prayer (Rom. 12:12). These ten words have served as our benediction at IJM's annual Global Prayer Gathering for over a decade. At the end of a weekend spent in prayer, asking God to intervene in the most difficult situations facing the work of justice around the world, we would be reminded of this simple exhortation to hope with joy, to patience in the midst of affliction, and to faithfulness in the work of prayer.

You'll find this "benediction" verse carried thematically throughout the devotional alongside other passages of scripture, stories of Biblical women, and the stories of IJM staff that spur us on to live joyfully in hope, patiently in affliction and faithfully in prayer.

Each week highlights one of the three exhortations from Romans 12:12. Week one focuses on being "joyful in hope," week two addresses "patience in affliction" and week three emphasizes "faithfulness in prayer." At the end of each day's devotional is an offering of prayer. We hope you'll find these written prayers of encouragement are a helpful start to expressing your heart to the Lord in prayer, especially when it's hard to find the words.

GROUP STUDY

If you're doing this devotional as a group, you'll find reflection and group discussion questions at the end of each week. You can certainly engage these questions individually as well if you'd like.



WEEK ONE

JOYFUL IN HOPE



In the work of justice, cultivating joyful hope in our daily lives is essential.

But like all good things, we have to intentionally work at it.

We hope this week's devotions will be a helpful source of cultivating *joy and hope* in your day to day.

We are going to focus on an "IJM family" verse. These ten words have served as our benediction at IJM's annual Global Prayer Gathering for over a decade: *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.* (Rom. 12:12 NIV)

So this week, we'll start where this verse starts—with our attention on *being joyful in hope*.

We'll pick up the rest of this verse, *patient in affliction and faithful in prayer*, in weeks two and three.

DAY ONE

WEEK ONE

For the joy set before him he endured the cross.

Hebrews 12:2

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotion time, expect God to meet with you. Get comfortable, relax, and just be with your Father. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to turn your attention to him, to make you more aware of his presence with you right now. Allow your mind to settle with a few minutes of silence.

TODAY’S DEVOTIONAL

There is a “fun captain” at IJM.

This may surprise you when thinking about an organization doing such serious work to protect the poor from violence. But cultivating a culture of joy is of great value at IJM. And joy often starts with just remembering to take ourselves a little less seriously. So our “fun captain” is a staff member with a regular day-to-day job, but who also helps incorporate “fun” into staff meetings and prayer retreats.

One year at a Global Prayer Gathering, the theme for the entire conference was joy. On the opening night, IJM’s founder invited nearly 1000 attendees to open wrapped pieces of chocolate. Why? Just because chocolate brings so much of us joy. And it was indeed a joyful sound to hear hundreds of candy wrappers being opened at the same time...at a *prayer* gathering!

In another illustration that evening, we were asked to cover the small votive candles on our tables with a lid. In a very short time, the room was dark—all of the light from the candles had been snuffed out.

Joy is like oxygen—it keeps our lights ablaze.

Throughout scripture we’re told hundreds of times, to rejoice, to be joyful, to sing with joy and gladness, to dance—to express *the joy of the Lord that is our strength* (Neh. 8:10). And then there is this extraordinary verse that declares it was for the joy set before him that Jesus endured the cross. Joy is a precious commodity in the kingdom of God. We were made for joy-filled lives. So what brings you joy? What makes you smile to think of it? Take time today to be your own fun captain and make space for joy.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Father in heaven, thank you for your joy. Help me to remember that you are a joyful God. You see all, know all and hold the entire universe in your hands—and you are filled with joy. I receive your joy over me today, even in the details that you’re attending to in my life. I choose to be an ambassador of your joy today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you’d like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it’s fine if nothing does!).

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DAY TWO

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WEEK ONE

No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame.

Psalm 25:3

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotion time, expect God to meet with you. Take a few moments to breathe. Thank God for the breath within you. Consider that the One you're seeking is nearer than the breath you breathe. Be still and know his nearness today.

TO DAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Placing your hope in the Lord is a rock-solid investment.

The Bible is completely unwavering in its position. There are no exceptions. No hidden clauses. There is only this assertion of truth—if you hope in God, you will *never be disgraced*. You will never be left wanting or full of regret for trusting God.

In the walk of faith, we will certainly never say: “If only I had trusted God *less*.” Quite the contrary, the purest yearning of our hearts is to know and trust him *more*.

It is in the middle of these places of yearnings, that your need is revealed. And it is there that God works best to reveal his provision. *His strength is made perfect in your weaknesses.* (2 Cor. 12:9)

As you walk through your day, what are you hoping for? It is there that Jesus wants to come and stand today. Can you see him in the middle of that which you hope for? May your heart leap today in quiet moments of awakening—*Jesus, you are my hope that never disappoints.*

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for this promise in your word that those who hope in you are never ashamed. I confess at times to doubting your promises. Help me to apprehend your word today with greater revelation of your truth. You are faithful. You won't let me down. I choose to place my hope in you and give thanks for all that you have done. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY THREE

WEEK ONE

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Breathe in his grace and love for you today. Exhale with the awareness of his presence with you—here and now.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Our hope is fueled by rejoicing.

This is not a conjured up rejoicing—though at times we must certainly will ourselves to rejoice. No, this is the rejoicing that comes from revelation that the hope in which we profess is indeed a joyful hope.

So we can always and at all times rejoice in the Lord.

No matter the circumstance, our hope is stirred by rejoicing over the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Our hope is stirred by rejoicing over the record of his faithfulness in our lives. Our hope is stirred by rejoicing over the beauty of his creation.

His faithfulness is as sure as the morning sunrise. (Lam. 3:23)

Our God is always faithful to provide what we need, even when that provision looks different than we'd hoped. Even when a promise seems unfulfilled, we can trust that he is actively working all things together for our good. (Rom. 8:28)

What's on your calendar today? What to-do lists are replaying in your mind? Take a moment to rejoice over each appointment, each task, and each assignment for today. May it become an invitation to find the joy of the Lord in the midst of your day. May you seize the moments to rejoice!

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord, thank you for teaching me to rejoice always. I confess it is hard to find places of rejoicing, especially in the midst of places of such great need and sorrow. Thank you for the assurance of your faithfulness even in the beauty of your creation. Open my eyes to see from your perspective today. Give me a glimpse of all that you are rejoicing over. And fill me to overflowing with songs of rejoicing. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

NOTES:

Dotted lines for notes.

DAY FOUR

WEEK ONE

And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a couple of moments to be still and express your desire to connect with the Lord right now.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

It's easy to discount your current position, especially when the challenges around you seem beyond your control.

We so often get bogged down in the details of our to-do lists, and going about the busyness of life. We get comfortable in our familiar roles—at work, at home, at church, in our communities—and we forget that we have been placed here, at this specific time, for a very specific purpose.

As we read the story of Esther now, it seems obvious that God had positioned her strategically as queen to eventually help save her people. She was meant to serve as an instrument of hope. Yet in that critical moment, Esther likely felt hopeless, not knowing how she could possibly help her people.

She needed a trusted advisor in Mordecai to point out to her what seemed so apparent to those around her. He gives her a different perspective, and perhaps even a glimmer of hope in the midst of this seemingly hopeless situation—he says: “Take a look at where you are! Look at your position and how God has strategically placed you. What do you think it's all for?”

In the midst of our daily lives and responsibilities, we can easily lose sight of God's invitation into the bigger picture. At IJM, our founder often reminds us that God has a plan for solving injustice in the world, and that

plan is you. But when we're just going through the motions of our day—serving in ministry, serving at work, or serving in our homes, it's easy to forget that you are part of God's bigger plan.

What is he prompting you to notice today about where he's positioned you? Are there those around you to whom you have been uniquely positioned to give specific encouragement or comfort?

Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you today, and to uncover the places where you were made to give hope.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Father, thank you for the reminder that I was made with divine purpose. I'm grateful that you are the God who ponders my path. You care about every detail of my life. Would you reveal to me today the specific ways you've positioned me to be an instrument of your grace and encouragement to those around me? Give me courage in the areas where it feels scary to step out and trust you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY FIVE

WEEK ONE

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:11

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to acknowledge the presence of God with you.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Jesus tells his disciples to do two things to have joy.

He says first, know that I love you and live out of the depth of that truth, that you are loved. It is the posture of receiving—receive my love. And second, he says obey my commands. It is the posture of submission.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. (John 15:10)

Obedience will keep you grounded in truth.

These are the foundations that Jesus laid for a life of joy that is found in him. Jesus tells his disciples about this relationship of love and obedience he has with the Father, and then he says go do the same thing. And the promise is that if you do these things, the joy that I have—my joy will be in you. And then your joy will be complete.

We are to apprehend the joy of the Lord. And this amazing thing occurs—his joy now becomes our own.

Perhaps there are some areas in your life today where the Holy Spirit is inviting you to simply open up to receive the love of the Lord. That first step of receiving his love often looks like confession. Coming to God

with your honest need, being open with him about where you've fallen short, asking and receiving his forgiveness.

Take a moment to let the Holy Spirit bring those areas to mind, and then confess them—right here in his arms of love. Let your joy be made complete today.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Holy Spirit, I invite you to search me and know me. Would you bring to mind any areas that I need to confess to you, any areas of striving or self-sufficiency, or sin that I need to relinquish in your presence today? I choose to turn away from those things, and to turn toward you, Lord Jesus. I receive your love and kindness toward me, and I choose to walk in your joy today, as a daughter who is fully known and loved by you. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY SIX



WEEK ONE

And hope does not disappoint.

Romans 5:5

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to acknowledge this sacred time and space to be with your Creator.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Wherever Jesus is, hope is present. There is no hopelessness found in him. He is the God of all hope. And hope does not disappoint.

Jesus will never disappoint you. It is impossible for him not to come through when you need him. Even when we are not currently experiencing that which we hope for, our hope is yet steadfast, and firmly fixed in the heart of Jesus.

As our staff gathers in prayer each day at IJM, we daily hope that the things we now need to pray for—rescue for the little ones being abused, freedom for slaves being so brutalized by hard labor, provision for the widow left destitute without shelter—will one day be things of the past.

These are the hoped for things that are not yet fully realized. We all carry cries of hope in our hearts. And yet, our hope is secure because it exists in Christ Jesus. Our lives and all that we hope for is now hidden with Christ in the heart of God. (Col. 3:3)

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for filling me with hope today. I trust you with every situation I'm facing today, especially those that feel hopeless. I'm grateful for your reminder that there is no hopelessness found in you. I place my hope and my trust in you, knowing that those who hope in you will never be put to shame (Ps. 25:3). Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

DAY SEVEN

WEEK ONE

Be joyful in hope.

Romans 12:12

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to be silent, and rest in the arms of the One who loves you.

TODAY’S DEVOTIONAL

As you come to the end of this week, perhaps it has been filled with questions and challenges, or perhaps you have been met with unexpected triumphs and joys. No matter what you faced this week, this exhortation from the Apostle Paul instructs us in how to respond.

He simply says: Do not forget to rejoice.

Do you remember the story of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist? She had been barren for many years and was now beyond childbearing age. But God was about to take her place of shame and disgrace and make it a place of rejoicing. Against all odds, she becomes pregnant.

The Lord has done this for me, she said. In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people. (Luke 1:25)

After many years of waiting, the day of rejoicing had come for Elizabeth. It did not happen or look the way she expected. Certainly she had endured pain in the waiting—the promise was far more delayed than she would have hoped.

But her day of rejoicing did come. And so will yours.

It may be long awaited. It may seem beyond the day of possibility. And it may not look the way you expect.

But you can yet rejoice in hope.

This is the expected end of every believer—there will be great rejoicing. So we are invited to start rejoicing now. We set our confident hope in Jesus who makes everything beautiful in its time (Eccl. 3:11).

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, let your name remain holy. In my life, in my heart, let your name take its rightful place above every other name. Let your will and your purposes have preeminence in my life. Be exalted right here in the midst of my rejoicing. I offer to you the fruit of my lips, a sacrifice of praise today. You are always good and your ways are sure. No matter what I’m facing, I will yet rejoice in you, my Savior. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you’d like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it’s fine if nothing does!).

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NOT TOO SMALL

IJM STAFF PRAYER-STORY

ALICE, IJM SOUTH ASIA

In Alice's own words at IJM's Global Prayer Gathering.

My name is Alice...and, I'm not a fan of movies. But last year, I took my son to see this movie called Zootopia. Have you seen it? Zootopia is about this little bunny rabbit who dreams of one day becoming a police officer. Her name is Judy Hopps. The problem is, she's really small. It does not seem like Judy Hopps can do a lot of the things that is expected of a police officer. So at first, people didn't take her seriously.

As we were watching the movie, my son turned to me and said, to my surprise, that this bunny rabbit reminded him of me. I knew my son was teasing me, because just like this rabbit, I am small. I am only 4 feet, 10 inches and I am often teased about being small. When people look at my size they wonder how much I can do on my own. And in many ways, they are right.

I first walked into the IJM office 13 years ago. I went there to apply for a job. I first heard about IJM through my mom. She was a school teacher. The Field Office Director had recently given a talk at her school about IJM's work combatting bonded labor slavery.

"I reminded myself that there were scores of people across the world praying for this rescue operation..."

And somehow that filled me with the courage I needed."

Now I must confess that at the time I didn't know anything about bonded labor, which is a form of modern day slavery. This is where people are lured in by the promise of a good-paying job that in reality often turns into a lifetime of slavery. I didn't know what kind of job I could do at IJM, but I was eager. Having just earned a Masters Degree in Computer Applications, I walked into the IJM office building with a baby on my hip, to pick up the job application. I think what the staff actually saw was a small woman (sort of like Judy Hopps). Later I found out that they actually thought I was a client coming in need of help.

After working through that confusion, IJM offered me a position. To be the receptionist and Executive Assistant to the Field Office Director! I agreed.

Just one week into my job, someone in the office asked me if I spoke Telugu. Telugu is a language spoken in the State that is north of us. I said "yes." And they said, "Great! You are going on a rescue operation. We are boarding a train and leaving this afternoon." I must confess that my first reaction was not excitement but a deep sense of inadequacy. I think we can all relate to that. I had never done something like this before. The team assured me that I was needed. I was going there to be the translator from Telugu to English between the government official and the victims. Suddenly, I started to doubt how good my Telugu really was. Would my best attempts be good enough?

As I sat on the train for the next few hours, I felt ever so small. My upbringing was very protective and conservative. In fact I had never met a person in slavery or been part of a rescue operation. I had

never even set foot inside a police station. These were all things that seemed way bigger than me. But I reminded myself that there were scores of people across the world praying for this rescue operation. Praying for this mission. And somehow that filled me with the courage I needed.

We arrived, with the government, at a massive brick kiln. It was mid-afternoon and extremely hot...well over 100 degrees. And the brick kiln was even hotter, because the bricks are made by being baked inside a furnace that is over 700 degrees Celsius! Because this was an open furnace, smoke and ashes filled up the entire kiln. Everyone inside was covered with ashes and dust. Within a few minutes we were covered also.

We gathered all the workers. There were 80 of them. The government official started to speak to them. But because he didn't know their language, their faces had no reaction. He was asking them if they were here on their own volition. If they were free to leave. Or were they being forced to stay. I translated everything he said as best as I could. Standing in the open massive kiln my voice sounded so small. None of the laborers reacted. And I couldn't tell if they had heard me. I later realized that they hesitated, not because they didn't hear me or understand my words, but because they were afraid. They didn't know if it was safe to speak up and say they needed help. This is how the owner keeps his hold over his slaves. **He uses fear to make them feel small and insignificant.**

But slowly they started to respond. I think they realized this was their window of hope. And as is custom for the poor to do in South Asia, they started



“And it was here,
in freedom, that
people begin to
flourish.”

BUT YOU CAN
YET REJOICE
IN HOPE.



to fall at the feet of the government official—kneeling down and touching his feet to thank him for his help. And that’s when it dawned on me—how much the words I had spoken, the translation I had provided, had meant for these eighty forgotten, people. I will never forget the look of relief and hope that replaced their utter fear and confusion. What an incredible joy it was for me to witness these men, women and children realize the police were going to actually free them from their years of slavery! To realize that they matter, that they are seen. This is a joy that God has allowed me to experience innumerable times since that first rescue operation.

Over the next 13 years, I wore many hats at IJM and over time I was promoted to be the Director of the Administration Department. Then, after completing my law degree, I was promoted again to be the Director of Casework. Which means I have the privilege of leading a team of incredible, passionate and courageous investigators, lawyers and social workers. I could never imagine that today I would be standing here in front of you having led one hundred and seventy rescue operations! I couldn’t imagine doing any of this before joining IJM. I couldn’t imagine going on a rescue operation, looking eye to eye with slave owners, arguing with powerful politicians and government officials. I never imagined that I would see

the faces of thousands of children, women, and men walking out of slavery into freedom. I have witnessed them eating their first meal as free human beings. I have escorted them back to their native hometowns and villages. Places where many hadn’t stepped into in decades.

And it was here, in freedom, that people begin to flourish.

Even though I felt I had so little to offer on my first rescue operation, God used me to do things I never dreamed I could do. **This is the beauty of our God.**

So this is my encouragement to you. What you are doing here is not insignificant. Your prayers are not little. They are vital. It matters. It did to me. It does for all my colleagues in South Asia. And I’m sure it does for the many IJM staff around the world like me that feel overwhelmed and under-qualified. As you pray, please remember that all we are required to do by God is to bring our five loaves and two fish. You bring yours. And I will bring mine. And together, we will see how God multiplies the little that we offer to end slavery in this world.

GROUP DISCUSSION

WEEK ONE

QUESTION 1:

Were you able to engage in Stillness at the start of each day's devotional? How did you experience it? What did you enjoy? What felt hard?

QUESTION 2:

On Day Two we took time to consider things that we are yet hoping for, and to invite Jesus into those places. What were some of those things? How are you experiencing Jesus in the midst of your hopes?

QUESTION 3:

What brings you joy? What makes you smile to think of it? Share some of those things that came to mind.

QUESTION 4:

What stood out to you in the stories of Esther, Elizabeth and Alice? In what ways do you relate (or not) to these women?

QUESTION 5:

How can those in your group best pray for you this week?

A young girl with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a white shirt, is blowing bubbles with a red wand. The background is dark with a large, illuminated, abstract sculpture made of thin, vertical rods. The scene is lit with soft, warm light, creating a bokeh effect with colorful bubbles and light spots.

WEEK TWO

PATIENT IN AFFLICTION

This week we'll focus on the exhortation to be patient in affliction.

We'll glimpse what it looks like to be patient in affliction through examples in scripture, and through the lives of women like Hannah and "the woman with the issue of blood," who placed themselves in unrelenting postures of prayer.

We trust this week's devotions will be a source of great encouragement to you in the places of hardship, where you are yet waiting for relief. May you find these words of comfort and encouragement to persevere and not give up.

DAY ONE

WEEK TWO

Be patient in affliction.

Romans 12:2

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotion time, expect God to meet with you. Get comfortable, relax, and just be with your Father. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to turn your attention to him, to make you more aware of his presence with you right now. Allow your mind to settle with a few minutes of silence.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

What does it look like to be patient in affliction?

It looks like deep groaning prayer, like Hannah's when she is pleading with the Lord to give her a son. It looks like Habakkuk taking his place at the watchtower to wait in prayer (Hab. 2:1). It looks like the woman with the issue of blood pressing through the crowd to touch Jesus (Luke 8:45).

Being patient in affliction often looks like impatience in prayer—an unrelenting move toward an honest conversation with God. Waiting for God to move. Waiting in the midst of pain and suffering.

It looks like endurance—not giving up.

Patiently waiting is not idly waiting. It is not waiting in vain. It is waiting with the relentless hope and expectation that the God you're praying to is about to respond.

Gary Haugen often exhorts IJM staff and supporters to persevere in the work of justice: “The victims of injustice in our world need our long obedience in the same direction—our legs and lungs of endurance. And we need sturdy stories of joy.”

The work of justice—rescuing people from slavery, bringing perpetrators to account, and transforming public justice systems—takes time. It is realized one faithful step at a time. Years of working and praying, until the fruit of patient endurance is realized, and we are refreshed by sturdy stories of joy.

What does being patient in affliction look like for you today? May you remain unrelenting in returning to Jesus again and again, your source of strength and courage to endure.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of patience in affliction. Thank you for the grace to endure hardship because you are with me. Thank you for strengthening and refreshing me each day as I come to you. Help me to keep returning to you in prayer. You are my source of strength and courage to endure. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY TWO

WEEK TWO

In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly.

1 Samuel 1:10

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotion time, expect God to meet with you. Take a few moments to breathe. Thank God for the breath within you. Consider that the One you're seeking is nearer than the breath you breathe. Be still and know his nearness today.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

In moments of great pain and anguish, it is difficult to know how to pray. We are often left at a loss for what to say.

And so our intercession, like Hannah's, often begins with weeping.

Hannah brings herself before the Lord, and she weeps. She is not looking for the right words. She is not trying to pray the right way. She is not concerned with how she looks or sounds. No, she comes before the Lord unraveled in her grief. And out of the depth of her lament—she prays.

Hannah points us to the intercession of tears.

In this world, Jesus assures us that we will all face trials and tribulations (John 16:33). We will encounter moments of deep anguish. Like Hannah, whether we are overcome by the pain of desperate longing or dreams yet unrealized, we can cry out to the Lord with tears of intercession.

There have been days at IJM when we are left without words. We are overwhelmed with grief by the violence we see inflicted on the weakest and most vulnerable in our world.

That is the time for the intercession of tears.

That place of honest lament gives expression to the deepest longings of our hearts. We cry out to the God who translates our tears—and he gives voice to our prayers.

If you're in a place of great affliction and longing, may you find encouragement today knowing that God hears your prayers sowed in tears. And He will give voice to your intercession.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord, thank you for meeting me in the places of my grief and longing. You collect my tears and list them on your scroll (Ps. 56:8). I'm grateful that I don't have to find the right words. You translate my tears. I offer to you the longings of my heart and invite your Holy Spirit to make intercession with groaning on my behalf today (Rom. 8:26). I trust you to hear and answer in your perfect timing. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY THREE

WEEK TWO

I was pouring out my soul to the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:15

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Breathe in his grace and love for you today. Exhale with the awareness of his presence with you—here and now.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever poured out your soul to the Lord? These words of Hannah's hold the essence of prayer. It is the great exchange—we pour out our hearts and he pours in his heart.

We are filled and refreshed as we pour out. Isn't that interesting? Everything in God's kingdom is opposite. You gain your life by losing it. The first is last and last is first. You receive by giving. And you are filled by being emptied—poured out.

This is the invitation of Jesus to us in the midst of difficulty. We must cast our burdens upon him, because he cares for us. (1 Peter 5:7)

We are led to the place of surrender. Like Hannah, we lay the weightiness of our cares at his feet and leave them there. Hannah offered her deepest desire, the gift she had cried out to receive, back to the Giver of that gift. She released both the desire and the outcome to the Lord.

May our hearts be poured out in surrender to the Lord today. May we earnestly pray to the God who holds it all—Lord, have your way.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord, I cast my cares on you today, remembering that you so deeply care for me. I surrender to you the needs and desires of my heart and entrust them to your good care. Thank you for your easy yoke and your light burden. I receive the good gifts of your loving-kindness today. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

NOTES:

DAY FOUR

WEEK TWO

Who touched me?

Luke 8:45

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a couple of moments to be still and express your desire to connect with the Lord today.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

There is hardly a better example in Scripture of enduring affliction than the woman with the issue of blood. She had been sick for twelve years. And her sickness had ostracized her from her community. She had exhausted all of her resources trying to get well.

And to no avail.

Until this one day, when she decides to press through the crowds, to move past societal boundaries and risk going where she should not have been. She was going to find Jesus in her suffering, no matter the cost.

A woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. (Luke 8:43-45)

We can only imagine what must have gone through her mind. She was determined to touch Jesus. She was determined to reach for her deliverance. She was not going to give up, unwilling to sit idly in her affliction. Her patience in affliction looked like something. In her pain, as she was bleeding, she resolved to keep walking forward. To not give up. She was going to touch Jesus.

And when she did, she received more than the healing she sought. When she touched his garment, he touched her heart. This woman had been ostracized from her community, considered unclean because of her condition. Touching Jesus should have been beyond her reach.

Yet in the anguish of her affliction, she reached for him still.

Isn't that the invitation to us? In the fog of pain and suffering, Jesus can at times feel beyond our reach. It can feel like pressing through the crowd just to get to him. But he is not far off. When you reach for him, you find that his eyes are fixed on you.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I reach for you today. I respond to your invitation to bring my affliction to your feet. I confess my need for you. I need your touch. I need to hear your voice, assuring me that in the midst of the crowd, you see me. You are attentive to my every need. And you are faithful to respond with your loving-kindness—"Who touched me?"

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY FIVE



WEEK TWO

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to acknowledge the presence of God with you.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Sometimes continuing to hope in the times of suffering feels like more energy than we can muster. And yet this scripture encourages us that our energy is renewed when we rightly place our hope.

Hoping in ourselves, in our strengths and abilities, or those of others will certainly "take" energy. It will require extraordinary human effort to sustain our self-sufficiency. And in this futile hope, we will grow weary.

But the Lord reminds us that if we use our strength to find our hope in him, we will not grow weary. In fact, this kind of hoping will renew your strength.

In the work of justice, and quite honestly in the work of all our daily lives no matter your occupation or place of service, we do grow weary in the waiting. We do get discouraged and at times feel our hope waning. But when we willfully pause to have a conversation with God in the midst of our waning hope, we remind our souls that our hope is not in ourselves, it is in the Almighty God.

And we will find, again and again, our strength is renewed.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Father, thank you for your invitation today to hope in you in times of affliction. Thank you for helping me to depend upon you. I receive the promise from your word that when I courageously turn from hoping in my abilities and place my hope in you, you are faithful to renew my strength. Thank you for equipping me for the work of prayer and service that you have for me to do today to impact the world around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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Dotted lines for notes

DAY SIX

WEEK TWO

I will take my place at the watchtower. I will stand at my post and watch.

I will watch and see what He says to me.

Habakkuk 2:1

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to acknowledge this sacred time and space to be with your Creator.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

The most significant time in prayer is also the most uncomfortable. It is in the moments of waiting and watching. When we've exhausted all of our words.

We come alongside the prophet Habakkuk, distraught by all of the injustices he is seeing around him. And we make the intentional climb to our watchtower—the deliberate set apart time and space to be with God. And in our affliction, we stand there. We wait—and we watch.

There is this sense of expectation that grows in these moments of waiting and watching in the secret place of prayer. The Spirit is beckoning us to come, and to stand watch. The Spirit within us knows what our minds and hearts are yet fighting to comprehend—that God is about to make known his voice.

If you wait for him, he will come.

IJM staff in the field know all too well about waiting, and watching to see what God will do. Often in the face of insurmountable odds to rescue people out of slavery, our staff find themselves like Habakkuk stationed on the ramparts—waiting for God to speak, waiting for him to intervene with the power of his voice.

The Holy Spirit within you is full of expectation. God speaks to us, and his voice is unmistakable. It is still and small, yes, but the impact of his voice is anything but still and small. When over five hundred slaves were rescued out of a brick kiln in India, it was clear that God had spoken.

We were created for this—watching and waiting. We were created to hear his voice, and to see the impact of his spoken word in the world around us. My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (Jn. 10:27)

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord, thank you for your presence here with me today. I position myself like Habakkuk did to wait and hear from you. I wait with expectation that you will speak, and that the impact of your voice will be unmistakable in my life and the world around me. I wait with confidence that I will hear and know your voice. Thank you for your Word that is living and active, and always speaking. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY SEVEN

WEEK TWO

Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

1 Samuel 1:18

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to be silent, and rest in the arms of the One who loves you.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Our perspective often changes before our situation does.

Have you ever experienced walking away from an encouraging message or conversation, or a time of personal prayer and devotion, with a renewed perspective? Your situation hasn't changed, but the lens through which you view it has been altered by truth.

Hannah walked away refreshed and encouraged when just moments before, she was completely distraught. After pouring her heart out to the Lord, and receiving the high priest's blessing, she was confident that God had heard her prayer.

As daughters of the Lord, we can have an unwavering confidence that when we seek him, he hears and will respond to our requests. We have this assurance in Christ Jesus, that we have what we have asked for in accordance to his will. (1 John 5:14)

And because we know that his plans and desires for us are always good, far better than we could imagine, we can rejoice in times of trouble. (Jer. 29:11, Eph. 3:20)

As you come to the end of this week, may you be filled with joyful confidence that your God has heard and will respond to the prayers of your heart.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord, thank you for your nearness today. Thank you for giving me a renewed perspective, to see those things concerning me through the lens of your truth. Thank you for your good plans for me, and the assurance that you are always listening and responding to my prayers. Make me an instrument of your good and perfect will in the world around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

NOTES:

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“God’s people trusted Jesus when he said that if we pray... and if we follow him...then he will do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine is possible.”

PRAYING FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

IJM STAFF PRAYER-STORY

CHRISTA, IJM

In Christa’s own words at IJM’s Global Prayer Gathering.

I worked with our team in Cambodia for 10 years, and during that time Jesus reminded our team that *what he wants to do in Cambodia is impossible*. It is impossible for us to stop the commercial sexual exploitation of children and equip a broken public justice system to effectively and sustainably protect

the poor from violence. BUT, Jesus also reminded us that *he came—he gave his life—to make the impossible... possible*. He came to bring life out of death. He came to redeem the irredeemable. He came to make right what is wrong.

In the early days of our work in Cambodia, we were shocked to the core by what we saw: an open, wholesale market of young children for rape—in mass numbers across the city, out in the open. On the internet, abusers trumpeted Cambodia as *the* place to purchase young children for sex with impunity—a place where the justice system was so dysfunctional—*so absent*—that

people could exploit the vulnerable without fear or shame. In fact, citizens feared the public justice system *and could not even imagine* what it would be like to have basic police protection, justice against their perpetrators, or life-giving aftercare. Years ago, the weak and the vulnerable were in an epic battle for their lives and for their dignity...and they had lost. It seemed impossible for light to pierce the darkness. In fact, people told us that it was impossible.

But, over the past 15 years we have seen Jesus do the impossible in Cambodia. Hundreds of girls and women have been rescued. Hundreds of traffickers and abusers have been held accountable for their crimes in local courts. Cambodia has some of the best private aftercare in the world. And I have seen untrained police move from intimidating—even slapping—victims to get them to tell the truth...to receiving sophisticated police training and abiding by victim-friendly procedures. Anti-trafficking police now put together princess puzzles with girls on the floor of the police station. Passionate government officials are working hard, and their consistent action over the past fifteen years has led to an astounding decrease in the number of minors being trafficked and sold.

In the early 2000s, research showed that *at least 15%* of those prostituted in brothels were young minors ages 15 and under. Today, IJM’s research and investigations show that *less than 1%* are young minors. That is a 95% decrease. And the prevalence of older minors ages 16 and 17 being exploited has gone from *at least 15%* down to 7.4%. This means that children are safer in Cambodia.

This astounding progress happened for two reasons: **FIRST:** The Cambodian public justice system successfully and consistently enforced their laws to protect the poor from violence and hold criminals accountable. **SECOND:** Every day, every month, every year for the past ten years, God’s people trusted Jesus when he said that if we pray...and if we follow him... then he will do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine is possible.

But, we have also seen that when this truth and light of Christ comes—*when his people rise up to pray and fight*—that evil steps up its fight. It digs its heels in and challenges us—*Will we grow weary? Will we stop praying? Will we stop fighting?*

The dawn is clearly here in Cambodia. We see the impossible becoming possible.

In Phnom Penh, the good news is that very few entertainment businesses operate as traditional brothels anymore—they no longer offer sex on site because they fear the police. However, our investigators identified one coffee shop that didn’t seem to be afraid—because they were paying powerful people for protection. They openly prostituted Vietnamese young women ages 16 to 25. Some were indebted to the owner, beaten if they would not have sex, and routinely degraded. IJM worked with the anti-trafficking police to conduct an operation which was tipped off one hour before arriving at the site. So we worked with police to conduct a second operation which was tipped off twenty minutes before arrival. But, unlike the old days, these criminals now feared police enough to close down their business and move to two separate

locations. We knew, however, that ensuring a tip-off didn't happen again and that police could effectively conduct an operation on two locations simultaneously... seemed impossible. But, God's spirit was at work. For several weeks, our team felt deeply burdened, even a physical, heavy pressure to pray. We knew that this kind—*what we were up against*—could only come out by prayer. So, IJM sent an e-mail to ask all of you to pray (*see how important those weekly prayer emails are?*). Back in Cambodia, our Church Mobilization team brought people together to physically surround this area of the city and pray. We cried out in weakness and desperation, knowing that by our own effort this would be impossible. **And through this...God's power was revealed.** We successfully worked with the two highest ranking officers—men passionate about justice—to conduct their largest and most complex operation of the year. No tip-offs happened. *Instead*, two simultaneous operations happened. Both sites were shut down. Six suspects were arrested. The corrupt officials were identified. Twenty girls and women were rescued. Light illuminated the night.

But, we know that these miracles—*the impossible*—only happen through prayer. God calls us to be on our knees, in weakness, seeking *him—his power and strength*—to combat the darkness. Have faith that Jesus *can and will* do the impossible—and then ask him to do it *every day*.

“We know that these miracles—the impossible—only happen through prayer.””



GOD HAS HEARD
AND WILL RESPOND
TO THE PRAYERS OF
YOUR HEART.

GROUP DISCUSSION

WEEK TWO

QUESTION 1:

Were you able to engage in Stillness at the start of each day's devotional? How did you experience it? What did you enjoy? What felt hard?

QUESTION 2:

What does being patient in affliction mean to you?

QUESTION 3:

What resonated with you in the stories of Hannah and the woman with the issue of blood? Did you gain any new insights or perspectives on prayer through their stories?

QUESTION 4:

What stood out to you in Christa's story? Where is God asking you to be patient in prayer?

QUESTION 5:

How can those in your group best pray for you this week?



WEEK THREE

FAITHFUL IN PRAYER

This week, we focus our attention on the exhortation to be faithful in prayer. (Rom. 12:12)

We hope you'll find encouragement in the daily devotions to persevere in prayer, especially in those times of waiting when answers seem far and fleeting.

In your daily stillness times, we pray that you will encounter the faithfulness of God to meet you in your prayers.

This final exhortation to be faithful in prayer is one that is held dear by IJM staff around the world. It is this benediction that sustains us in the work of justice. It reminds us who holds justice and mercy in the palm of his hands. And in the recognition of that truth—that God is God, and we are not—we bow down.

We give to him what is already his, for justice and righteousness are the very foundations of his throne. (Ps. 89:14)

So as you engage in this week of devotions, receive our heartfelt words of benediction: May you find Jesus to be faithful, in prayer.

DAY ONE

WEEK THREE

Be faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:2

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotion time, expect God to meet with you. Get comfortable, relax, and just be with your Father. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to turn your attention to him, to make you more aware of his presence with you right now. Allow your mind to settle with a few minutes of silence.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

For the last twenty years at IJM, we have sought to be faithful in prayer. It has not always been easy. Every day when we gather together for our daily staff prayer time, we face the struggle of temptation.

In the fight against injustice—praying day after day for freedom for the oppressed, and release for the prisoners—we are tempted to grow weary.

We are tempted to become doubtful.

We are tempted to grow discouraged.

We are tempted to stop praying.

But Jesus reminds us to just come. He says to come as we are. He says to come in whatever state of temptation we find ourselves. If we can turn our hearts to him and present even the feeblest of prayers, he will come with his faithfulness.

When we are faithless, he is still faithful, for he cannot deny himself. (2 Tim. 2:13)

In our prayers, he is faithful. And so we come—again and again. We come. Because you, Jesus, are faithful in prayer.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Jesus, I rely on your faithfulness. In my silent offering today, in the groaning of the interior spaces of my heart—I turn to you. By faith, I turn the attention of my heart to you. And I wait—knowing that you are faithful in this prayer. You are faithful to come.

I will wait. I will not grow weary. I will not faint. I will not stop lifting the gaze of my heart to you. You are my Faithful One, and I am yours. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY TWO

WEEK THREE

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

Isaiah 58:9

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotion time, expect God to meet with you. Take a few moments to breathe. Thank God for the breath within you. Consider that the One you're seeking is nearer than the breath you breathe. Be still and know his nearness today.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

One of the first stillness principles we learn during new staff orientation at IJM is that of "presence." Simply being present to God, and then to one another.

It is this posture of prayer in stillness, this practice of silence and solitude with the Lord, where all we do is come. We simply say, "Lord, I am here."

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah reminds us of something essential to the life of prayer. He says that when we come with the right heart—in humility, in simple devotion, and authentically seek the Lord's heart, he responds to our coming with these longed-for words: Here am I.

The great I AM presents himself to the one who has sought him.

We hold this passage of scripture especially dear to our hearts at IJM, because Isaiah is speaking in the context of injustice. He is relaying the Lord's passionate heart toward those who are most brutalized and oppressed. And he says, when you care about them like I do then you'll experience the true light of my presence.

If you make sure that the hungry and oppressed have all that they need, then your light will shine in the darkness, and even your bleakest moments will be bright as a clear day. (Is. 58:10)

In our moments of stillness, when we seek to be present to the Lord, we find that our hearts will yield to his heart. Our hearts will break for what breaks his heart. And we will begin to pray the prayer of his heart.

This is the first and most important principle of prayer—find out what's on God's heart, and then pray it.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Father, here I am. I lift my heart to you today. Come with your still, small voice and speak. I want to know the prayer that you are praying over me, over my family, over my community. I want to echo your voice. I offer you my yielded heart today. Break my heart for what breaks your heart. And fill me with the light of your presence—your joy, your peace and your love—that I might shine brightly in the darkness. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY THREE

WEEK THREE

He told them a parable, urging them to keep praying and never grow discouraged.

Luke 18:1

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotion time, expect God to meet with you. Take a few moments to breathe. Thank God for the breath within you. Consider that the One you're seeking is nearer than the breath you breathe. Be still and know his nearness today.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

It takes faith to pray.

We are praying to an invisible God. The moment we turn our attention to him, we are acting within the confines of faith. We seek him, by faith, that he hears us and will reward our seeking. (Heb. 11:6)

Jesus fully knew the challenges that we would face in prayer, so he takes time to encourage us in our praying. He says to his disciples, don't grow discouraged. Keep praying. And then he reminds us of the nature of the God to whom we pray.

He tells the story of an unjust judge who eventually relents because of a widow's persistent asking. And Jesus says to us, you need to know that your God is not like this unjust judge. He is far better, and you are his children. So won't he bring justice to you when you cry out to him day and night? Mark my words: God will intervene fast with vindication. But here's the question...will he find anyone who still has faith? (Luke: 18:7-8)

We have often looked to this story at IJM when facing quite literally corrupt judges. Our staff must daily engage with those holding power, imploring them to yield that power with righteousness and justice. And

when they do not, our staff is committed to keep coming like the widow to the unjust judge. But we do not present our cases to that judge alone, we go before the Lord who is the only Righteous Judge. And we have seen him intervene.

So this is the instruction that Jesus gives in prayer—keep praying. Pray, and never give up. Do not grow discouraged because you don't see the answers right now. Keep praying, and they will come.

Are there areas in your life that you have stopped praying about because you've grown discouraged? Jesus has not forgotten the prayers of your heart. Would you lift them to him again today? He is faithful to hear you, and to answer.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for your encouragement to pray. Thank you for the reminder that you are not like an unjust judge, but you are full of loving-kindness. You are faithful and trustworthy. Increase my faith today to seek you. Bring to the forefront of my mind the things that you're waiting for me to talk to you about. Thank you for giving me endurance to keep praying and to never give up. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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Dotted lines for note-taking.

DAY FOUR

WEEK THREE

If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place.

Esther 4:14

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a couple of moments to be still and express your desire to connect with the Lord today.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

One of the most important truths we encounter at IJM is simply this: God loves the poor and the broken.

He is on the side of the destitute. He is working on behalf of the ones that are the world's "throwaways." And when that truth gets etched into our souls, we will also come to rest upon another: God will use anyone who is willing to come alongside him in the work that he is doing.

We discover that this truth is an invitation.

You need not be powerful or wealthy or strong, God is moved by your weakness.

He is attracted to weak things.

He loves to take that which appears broken and useless, and make it whole and beautiful and beyond value. He loves to restore beauty for ashes. (Is. 61:3)

When we call out to God in prayer, he is faithful to respond. He withholds no resources. He comes with all of the power and glory and majesty of his kingdom to uphold those who are weak.

And that includes you.

If you cry out to him in your weakness, he will answer in his strength.

Like Esther, you are invited to faithfully lift your voice in prayer. In the most unlikely circumstances and often in the face of our greatest fears, we are given the choice to rely on God's strength.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Father, thank you for the invitation to join you in your work of prayer today. Help me to be bold and courageous in prayer and action. I want to have a heart like Esther's that says yes to your promptings, even when it seems scary and hard. Allow my days to be faith-filled, confident of your goodness and your care for me, and those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY FIVE

WEEK THREE

Go, gather together all the Jews in Susa, and fast and pray for me... I and my attendants will fast as you do.

Esther 4:16

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to acknowledge the presence of God with you.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

The work of preparation begins in the interior spaces of our hearts.

Whenever God invites us to use our hands to do something, he invites us first to be with him. He calls us to prayerful preparation.

But he does not call us alone.

Esther is about to make a life-altering move. She is going before the king unannounced, with a penalty of death as a nearly sure consequence. And yet she chooses to willingly lay down her life for others.

Where will she find the strength to do this? How does one prepare for such selfless and courageous action?

Esther allows us to glimpse a secret that we later witness even our Lord Jesus model in the garden of Gethsemane, the night before he goes to the cross for you and me.

She prays. And she asks those around her to pray as well—to watch and pray with me.

Those are the familiar words of Jesus to his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. He could have asked the disciples to do many other things. He could have told them to read the scriptures, to preach or to give a word

of encouragement. But he did not. He said to watch and pray. (Matt. 26:41)

In the place of prayer, we find courage to lay down our lives. We find the courage to lay all that we hold dear at the feet of Jesus—and to trust that he will meet us with his royal scepter of grace.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for the invitation to come to you in prayer. I am so grateful that you are a trustworthy and gracious king. You gave your life so that I could have unhindered access to your presence. You have given me a royal ring. I belong to you. Today, I invite you to bring to mind the things that you're asking me to surrender to your care. Thank you for giving me courage to follow you wherever you are leading. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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DAY SIX

WEEK THREE

He was pleased when he noticed Queen Esther waiting in the court. He extended his golden scepter with his hand, inviting her in.

Esther 5:2

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to acknowledge this sacred time and space to be with your Creator.

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

The Lord is always pleased when we come to him.

In the daily work of justice at IJM, we often need to remind ourselves that God is eager to hear and answer our requests. On the one hand, the things we bring before him can feel so big and daunting, like praying to see slavery come to an end in our lifetime. And it can be scary to make so bold a request.

Yet on the other hand, we can find ourselves neglectful of the things that seem so "small" and personal—we may even think them insignificant in some ways.

Perhaps you can relate.

But our God is one who cares about every detail of our lives. He numbers the hairs on your head (Luke 12:7) and he's the same God who set the stars and the moon in place (Ps. 8:3). His eye is on it all.

He cares intimately about you and so delights in your coming to him. In fact, the Bible says that he so delights in you that he is rejoicing over you with great exuberance (Zeph. 3:17).

And his hand is always outstretched to you, inviting you to come in closer.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Father, thank you for hand extended and your arms wide open to me today. I am amazed by how much you love me and care about the smallest detail of my life. Thank you for making me a part of your royal family, and for calling me out by name. Help me to see your hand in the details of my life today, and give me courage to trust those things to your good care of me. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

NOTES:

Dotted lines for notes.

DAY SEVEN

WEEK THREE

The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are saved.

Proverbs 18:10

STILLNESS

As you settle into this devotional time, expect God to meet with you. Take a moment to be silent, and rest in the arms of the One who loves you..

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL

Today, we will offer declarations of praise. If you're able to do so, read this devotion out loud and offer it to the Lord with your voice.

I run to you today. Your name holds within it everything that I need.

You are Jehovah Jireh—the Lord my provider.

You are Jehovah Nissi—the Lord my banner.

You are Jehovah Shalom—the Lord my peace.

You are Jehovah Rophe—the Lord my healer.

You are Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is there.

You are all things and everything. You are my sufficiency.

Your name is strong. Your name is mighty. Your name brings deliverance.

I run into your name today. I bring my whole self into the strong tower, the shelter that is your great name.

As I survey the landscape of the day before me, I acknowledge that you are unable to deny your name. I bring to the forefront of my mind your name—I remember who you declare yourself to be in my life.

You are always constant. You are unchanging. You are immovable. And so I trust you for all that concerns me, and the world around me, that you will be faithful to your name.

OFFERING OF PRAYER

Almighty God, you alone are faithful to provide, to protect, to heal and to restore. I remember your name. I offer to you my trust in the greatness of your name. I run to you in prayer today, where I find strength and safety under the shelter of your name. Amen.

CLOSING STILLNESS

Take a couple of minutes to be still and wait on God. Just wait for a moment or two and see if anything comes to mind that you'd like to jot down as you close your time (no pressure, it's fine if nothing does!).

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FOLLOWING GOD'S LEADING

IJM STAFF PRAYER-STORY

ESTHER, IJM SOUTH ASIA

In Esther's own words at IJM's Global Prayer Gathering.

When I was 8 years old Jesus became my all—my Savior, my Redeemer and friend.

At a young age, I was quite involved in the work of our local church where my parents served as pastors. I often recollect with fondness how my parents loved the poor, the distressed. How they loved like Jesus and nursed the broken to wholeness.

Once every year my family attended a prayer retreat. During one such retreat the pastor encouraged us to seek God's purpose for our lives. So I went to God in prayer. I asked him what the purpose of my life was.

I was just fifteen but God answered.

He spoke to me through Jeremiah 51:20: *You are my battle-axe and weapons of war, and with you I will shatter godless nations, governments and kingdoms.*

In the days to follow, it was as if my spiritual eyes were opened to see the lost, to see the need. My heart was burdened to see more of God's righteousness—his right order around me.

God was preparing me to be one of his instruments for the fight against injustice.

After earning an Engineering degree, I worked for six years in the corporate world. I got married and moved to another part of the country. I believe it was here, and in this season that God was drawing me closer into his purpose.

The opportunity arose for me to interview with IJM. As I waited to hear back after my interviews, I prayed. I asked God to make it clear and without a doubt whether this work at IJM was where he was leading me.

My husband and I had taken a brief vacation during that time and on our return trip home, I walked into a little bookstore. I reached for a rather large Bible and right next to it, another book fell right smack onto my face! To my surprise, that falling book was *Good News About Injustice* by IJM founder Gary Haugen. Imagine that! It seemed God was confirming to me that this is where he wanted me to be!

In his gentle shepherd-like way, God brought many more confirmations. He brought me to a place of peace. And I obeyed.

I was about to embark on a divine adventure. What would an engineer do to seek justice? God knew. I didn't know, but thankfully, he did.

Esther has been instrumental in bringing transformation to the public justice system in South Asia to rescue and protect thousands from a life of slavery.

“My heart was burdened to see more of God's righteousness—his right order around me.”

GROUP DISCUSSION

WEEK THREE

QUESTION 1:

Were you able to engage in Stillness at the start of each day's devotional? How did you experience it? What did you enjoy? What felt hard?

QUESTION 2:

When do you notice feeling weary or discouraged in prayer? What helps you to keep praying and not give up?

QUESTION 3:

On Day Seven we offered words of praise out loud. How did you experience that time? What did you notice as you engaged in verbally praising God?

QUESTION 4:

Are there areas in your life, or matters in the world around you like poverty and injustice, that you have grown weary or discouraged to pray about?

QUESTION 5:

How can those in your group best pray for you this week?

A woman with her back to the camera, wearing a white sleeveless top and a red skirt with a textured pattern, stands in a stone archway. She is looking out over a town at sunset. The archway is illuminated with warm lights along its inner edge. The text "YOUR NAME BRINGS DELIVERANCE." is centered in the upper part of the image.

YOUR NAME BRINGS
DELIVERANCE.

PREPARING FOR

WEEK FOUR

As next week will be your final group meeting for this devotional study, plan to take some time next week to reflect on how you've experienced God in these past 21 days. Recall the devotions or stories that most deeply resonated with you. Consider the places where you felt a gentle nudge from the Holy Spirit to explore further with him in prayer and in the Word, and then pray about those in your community whom you might invite into this process of discernment with you.

GROUP “WRAP UP” DISCUSSION

WEEK FOUR

QUESTION 1:

Did you have any favorite daily devotions or staff stories? Which ones most resonated with you?

QUESTION 2:

What have you learned about being still and spending time with the Lord? In what ways did God reveal more of himself to you?

QUESTION 3:

What steps of continued devotion might he be inviting you to take? Are there specific steps of courage and faith that you sense God leading you into?

QUESTION 4:

Are there practices from this devotional that you plan to incorporate into your daily routine?

QUESTION 5:

How can those in your group continue to pray for you?



LEADER'S GUIDE

FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

You don't need a lot of experience to lead a small group—just a desire to know God more intimately and to help others also journey to that end.

Here are some tips for preparing your small group to work through this devotional:

PREPARATION

- Pray. Ask God to reveal truths to you that the group needs to hear as you prepare.
- Read beforehand. Read through the entire session

at least once or twice to familiarize yourself with the topic you'll be discussing before each session. Jot down any insights or questions that come to you along the way.

- Explore. If you discover you have questions as you're reading the material, or you simply want to have a broader understanding of the session's topic to help your small group better understand, explore outside resources and make some notes.
- Get context. Some sessions have additional verses to look up. Read the entire chapter in which the verse is located to understand the context.

LEADING

- **Pray.** Begin each session in prayer. Ask God to open your hearts to hear clearly from him.
- **Get to know one another.** In your initial meeting, ask everyone to introduce themselves and share where they are in their justice journey (e.g. what led them to more seriously pursue justice, where are they hoping to grow).
- **Be mindful.** Not everyone will have the same background, and everyone will be at different stages in their walk with Christ. Be ready to explain "churchy" terms that some might not understand.
- **Foster an atmosphere of real sharing.** Groups that want to go deep have to be real with each other, but not everyone is comfortable being open. To encourage sharing:
 - Initiate openness by being honest about your personal journey and questions.
 - Create a confidentiality agreement to keep anything shared between group members private.

Encourage everyone to participate. Have people take turns reading different verses or sections. Try to encourage everyone to answer the questions, but don't force anyone to answer if they're uncomfortable.

Facilitate. Some people are more assertive in discussions while others can be hesitant to speak

up. Here's how to mediate so that everyone gets fair time:

- Let people talk if they feel led, but be ready to gently interject if others haven't had much chance to speak.
- Encourage quieter members to share by asking openly for new opinions or by asking them directly.
- Always wait a few moments before continuing on to another point.

Go with the flow. Although these sessions each have a specific focus, be open to where the Spirit leads. Seemingly off-topic points might reveal truths you've never considered before.

Encourage questions. Don't be afraid of not knowing the answer, and don't be afraid to pose your own questions! Direct the questions to the group and see if anyone has any insights. If none of you knows the answer, pray about it at the end of the session.

Pray (more). Spend serious time in prayer. Have everyone pray, whether aloud or silently. Have a moment of silence before praying to allow everyone to clear their minds and to enter into the presence of God.

Engage. At the end of the devotional, we've included ideas of how your group might want to get even more involved in the work of justice. Pray about what direction God wants your group to take, then plan together how each of you can take part.



INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

is the world's largest international anti-slavery organization, working to fight modern day slavery, human trafficking, and other forms of violence against the poor.

We are inspired by God's call to love all people and seek justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed.

NEARLY

50,000

RESCUED

OVER

1 MILLION

PROTECTED



STAY CONNECTED WITH IJM AFTER THIS STUDY

SIGN UP FOR PRAYER UPDATES:

We rely on the support of our global prayer partners and prayer communities as we work in areas of great darkness and serve those in desperate need of rescue and restoration. Join thousands of people committed to seeking justice through prayer. You'll receive weekly emails with urgent and specific prayer requests.

ijm.org/pray

BECOME A FREEDOM PARTNER:

Freedom Partners boldly give \$24 or more a month to provide rescue and restoration to children and their families — no matter how long justice takes. This fight for justice takes time, energy and resources. It takes trust in our Lord. It takes you.

Send rescue to children and their families today.

ijm.org/freedompartner

