



**PRAYER LEADER'S
RESOURCE**

2018 – 2019



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Welcome to this year's Prayer Leader's Resource Manual!

We are so grateful that Brenda Wood accepted the task of receiving, editing and compiling the devotional submissions for this year's manual. Thank you, Brenda, for all your dedicated work and the great job you did.

As with most of our resources we are using the New Living Translation, unless otherwise indicated. One of the new things you will notice this year is that the Planning Team Devotionals are meant to be used as both an inspirational and learning time. To that end, we have used excerpts from Donna Lamothe's excellent course on **Leadership Foundations** as the substance for the Planning Team Devotionals.

You will also notice fewer written prayers for each month. While we want to provide helps for those uncomfortable or unfamiliar with praying out loud, we also want to encourage freedom of expression in prayer as you speak with our heavenly Father. So, in place of more written prayers, we have provided a list of prayer topics to go along with the written prayers. Participants are encouraged to express in their own words their thoughts and desires related to these prayer topics. God hears our words, and knows our thoughts and our hearts. My hope is that those at our Prayer Connections will grow increasingly comfortable in speaking out loud to God together with their sisters and brothers in the family of God. Neither family nor God require fancy words or formal speech.

May I just say how appreciative I am of those who give themselves to the prayer ministry of this organization? Our Regional Prayer Advisors, led by Seleda Frey, are so faithful in sharing together in prayer for RSVP and for each of our group Prayer Coordinators and Prayer Connections. Karen Erickson continues to call us to prayer in her beautiful presentation of the Prayer Force letter that comes out on the first Wednesday of each month. Brenda Wood has worked diligently to pull together the components of this *Prayer Leader's Resource*. With their leadership, we trust that our groups will continue to build every aspect of ministry on the foundation of prayer.

My heart is humbled when I consider all who pray for us on staff and for those in leadership positions in our groups. But even more, my heart is touched to know that our amazing Saviour prayed for us – for you and me – as he was preparing to go to the cross so that we could be forgiven and redeemed and transformed.

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me." (John 17:20-21)

And not only did he pray for us then, but he continues to pray for us.

Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (Romans 8:34)

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

May we be ever faithful in following Jesus' example of praying for all believers, that we may walk in love and unity, to the glory of God.

Praying with you,



Barbara Fuller
Director of inLight Bible Studies

Summer 2018

Dear Friends:

How did God answer your prayers this year? Do you remember the thrill of excitement (and perhaps even surprise) when he answered? What a blessing it is to know and love and serve the living God!

Prayer changes things. As James 5:16b says, *The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.* I am ever so grateful for the many of you who prayed as I worked on this *Prayer Leader's Resource* for the very first time.

Thank you also to all who submitted devotionals. Each one was beautifully heart-warming. Those we could not use this time will be kept on file and may appear in another RSVP publication or a later edition of the PLR. Many thanks also to those who helped to write our prayers of request: Karen Erickson, Cindy Palin, Seleda Frey, and Sheila Giguere.

Although we were not able to include all the devotionals, several that were submitted reminded us that in serving God we are called to action. For example, Adena Paget reflected on Micah 6:8: *No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.* Adena adds, "Did you notice all the action words? Do; love; walk. This tells us that we cannot sit around and wait for God. There comes a time when we must act! We are the hands and feet and mouths of God to use for his glory!"

How wonderful to be assured that God loves us. One devotional spoke about the Father's love and verses from the gospel of John remind us of that love. But John also writes of love as an action word: *Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.* (1 John 3:18)

One writer commented on the beauty of a scar. Do you know how we get scars? It is not from sitting in an easy chair. No, scars come from doing. Others wrote about the light; but even in the light we are called to action. *The bright light of Christ makes your way plain; so no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true—these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it.* (Ephesians 5:6-8, MSG)

As we all actively pray, do, love and walk this year - only God knows what far-reaching effects we will have as we serve him in RSVP. Be ready for that thrill of excitement and, yes, maybe even surprise as he answers.

Sincerely,

Brenda



Brenda J. Wood, Author and Motivational Speaker

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What Is a Prayer Connection?

If we asked those who attend regularly “What is an RSVP Prayer Connection?” we would probably get a different definition from each of them.

Technically, it is what the name implies – a time set aside specifically to connect with each other and with God in prayer. But it is also the solid foundation of our RSVP groups, the pre-cursor to reaching out with the gospel to others. It is recognition that no matter how gifted, talented, trained or willing we might be, we cannot be effective witnesses to God’s love without inviting God to be our partner.

In the ‘traditional’ RSVP groups, there have been three organized meeting times:

- the **outreach event**, which is the focus of our ministry, is where we share Jesus with the guests;
- the meeting of the **Planning Team** (those chosen to lead the local group), which is prior to the outreach event, is where we work out the details of the upcoming outreach event;
- the **Prayer Connection**, which is the prayer time held before the other two meetings, is when all are invited to come and pray for the outreach event, the national RSVP ministry, the needs of the local group, our communities, our country, and for one another.

The time of prayer begins with a devotional provided through the **Prayer Leader’s Resource**. A time of praise and thanksgiving and a time of intercessory prayer follow the devotional. Written prayers of worship and prayers of request are provided so those who don’t often pray audibly can be comfortable participating. These prayers also help begin the flow of prayer; they help us all to pray outside our usual way of thinking. With focused thinking, we praise God, pray for the person that we invited from our exercise class or book club, for the one who will be sharing their faith story, for our Prime Minister, our firefighters, for Donna Lamothe, for what is on the heart of each one who attends, and so on. It is always an encouraging and stimulating time.

Over the years, the name and the format of the prayer time have evolved, but never its purpose. Prayer is truly our strength and we can be confident that our God, who listens to each word spoken, is pleased to answer and to use our humble prayers to bring about his great and mighty will in the hearts and lives of many.

As RSVP small groups meet for Bible studies, inSPIRE journeys and RSVP films, this **Prayer Leader’s Resource** will be a useful tool in those less formal settings as well. RSVP prayer materials are developed to guide any group into a meaningful time of connecting with God and to nurture those new to personal, audible prayers. They also provide a starting point for the leader’s personal preparation and resources to lead others. Whether your group meets in two’s and three’s with a cup of tea, or in a larger group as a way of maintaining connections, the prayer will be sweet and valuable to each one and to RSVP Ministries.

Guidelines for Prayer Connections

Format: 60-90 minutes

Preparation for your Prayer Connection

- Print two copies of the monthly devotional (with the front and back on two separate pages);
- Cut out the scriptures printed under 'Reflecting on God's Word', as well as the Worship Meditation scripture, the Prayers of Worship, and the monthly Prayers of Request;
- You can also download the devotional information to a tablet for your use and use a printed copy to cut and distribute scripture and prayers;
- You are also encouraged to sign up for the **Prayer Force** and to present and pray for the most current prayer requests for RSVP from that monthly prayer letter.

The **Prayer Leader's Resource** is found on the website: www.rsvpministries.com.

Website Procedure:

- Obtain a username and password from your Regional Prayer Advisor, Regional Director or Regional Chair Advisor; you will be taken directly to *Leader's Source*. On the page click on 'Leader's log-in';
- Under 'Resources for Bible Study and Prayer', click on 'Resources for Prayer';
- Click on 'Download' next to the Prayer Leader's Resource; document will open in a separate tab. To save this on your computer, you must download by clicking on the download icon at the top right of the page;
- If you want to print from the website, find the material you need by scrolling through the pages;
- Print the information needed; when printing individual items, print by the printer page number and not by the Resource page number;
- For your convenience, each month on *Leader's Source* the devotionals and prayer requests for the coming month are made available in a separate document under 'What's New'.

Gather and Connect (10-20 Minutes)

Welcome, introductions, conversation and simple refreshments.

Distribute: Invitations for next month's outreach meeting;
Scripture references or printed verses for 'Reflecting on God's Word';
Prayers of Worship, Prayers of Request, and paper for personal prayer requests.

Devotional (10-20 Minutes)

The Devotional Reading and 'Reflecting on God's Word'. Allow time for and encourage people to share their thoughts.

Worship (10 Minutes)

If you like, sing a song or include recorded worship music as part of the Worship Meditation time.

- Have someone read the passage for Worship Meditation;
- Share specific answers to prayer from your last Prayer Connection and Outreach Meeting;
- Conclude this time with the written prayers of worship and your sentence prayers of worship, praise and thanksgiving.

Petition (30 Minutes)

- If the group is larger than 10, divide it into smaller groups for prayer when possible;
- Avoid praying one person after another in a circle;
- Encourage participants to pray for one request at a time;
- Encourage people to pray spontaneously;
- Encourage everyone to participate by reading the provided written request.

Timing:

- 5 to 15 minutes for your local outreach ministry;
- 10 minutes for our world and RSVP Ministries (prayers of request);
- 5 minutes for personal needs.

Conclude by praying for those on your heart who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; pray for them by first name and ask for open doors to invite them to the outreach event.

Tips and Tools for Prayer Leaders

1. Prepare Your Own Heart

- Prayerfully choose a devotional for each month or use the month's designated devotional.
- Read and reflect on the devotional and scriptures with the intent to apply them in your own life.
- Pray for your Prayer Connection gathering; be open to creative ideas that God may give.

2. Plan for Variety

- Create interest by giving your Prayer Connections a theme or unique setting. Here are some examples.
 - **Be a blessing** – collect items for a specific group such as a women's shelter, community youth facility, or pregnancy care centre; pray specifically for them.
 - **Drive a prayer van** – gather a few people to drive around your community stopping to pray in front of places such as schools, city hall, a court house; finish up at a coffee shop.
 - **Have an exchange** – plants, Christmas ornaments, candles, recipes.
 - **Meet in a distinctive location** – a tea house, a historic property or in someone's back yard.
Consider community rooms in shopping malls and libraries which are sometimes free of charge.
- Encourage participation while respecting the differences in each person's walk of faith.
- Let each person pray as they are inspired and give the option of silent prayer.
- Set an example by praying simple, succinct prayers on one subject. Do not feel responsible to audibly pray for every request.

3. Involve More People

- Expand participation by asking others to lead a song, read the devotional or share an answer to prayer.
- Invite those who don't usually attend. Personal invitations are always most effective.
- Create special invitations and distribute them widely, inviting those Christians who don't usually attend. They may go to your church or be in your social group.
- Prayer Connection invitations can be placed on the tables at the outreach event.
- Briefly include the Prayer Connection information in announcements at the outreach event.
- Collaborate with the reservations coordinator and occasionally ask callers to call specifically for the Prayer Connection. Ask them to call early enough to include an invitation to the Prayer Connection in the message. Inviting people from your email list is possible too. Try using 'E-vites'.
- Challenge each planning team member to make it a priority to attend and to bring at least one other person with her.

4. Provide Effectiveness

- If people are comfortable with it, break into groups of two or three to pray for personal requests.
- Praying scripture is a valuable way of praying in God's will. Provide pre-printed verses of Scripture for participants to lift their personal concern to the Lord using the Word of God. (Example: 1 Peter 5:7—“Father, today I cast the care of my troubled daughter on you. I believe you care for me.”) Each person inserts their personal concern in the underlined portion. This keeps the prayer brief, but allows each to present their need to God; this can be done silently.
- Worship using the names of God (see Page 11). Set the example by speaking out one of the attributes. For example, “I thank you, Jesus, that you are my Redeemer;” “We worship you, our Wonderful Counselor.”

Names of God with Scripture References

The names of God used in the Bible help us understand the many aspects of his character. God's names represent his attributes, his nature, and all the ways he relates to us. Using these names in prayer causes us to better know the One who knows us intimately and loves us unconditionally.

The list below is given to enhance your times of worship, but it is by no means exhaustive. As you incorporate these into your times of prayer, you express your trust in the name of the Lord our God!

Abba – “Papa” (Romans 8:15)	I AM (Exodus 3:14, John 8:58)
Adonai – Lord, Master (Malachi 1:6)	Immanuel – God with Us (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23)
Advocate (1 John 2:1)	Jehovah Jireh – Lord will Provide (Genesis 22:13-14)
Alpha and Omega (Revelation 22:13)	Jehovah Nissi – Lord Our Banner (Exodus 17:15)
Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22)	Jehovah Sabaoth – Lord of Hosts (Isaiah 6:1-3)
Anointed One (Daniel 9:26)	Jehovah Shalom – Lord of Peace (Judges 6:24)
Author of Our Faith (Hebrews 12:2)	Judge (Isaiah 33:22)
Bread of Life (John 6:35)	King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15-16)
Bridegroom (Isaiah 62:5)	Lamb of God (John 1:29)
Bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16)	Light of the World (John 8:12)
Chosen One (Isaiah 42:1)	Living Water (John 4:10)
Christ (Matthew 16:16, Luke 9:20)	Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5)
Comforter (John 14: 26)	Messiah (John 4:25)
Cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16)	Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6)
Creator (1 Peter 4:19)	Our Strength (Jeremiah 16:19)
Deliverer (Romans 11:26)	Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)
El Elyon – Most High God (Genesis 14:18-20)	Redeemer (Job 19:25)
El Olam – Everlasting God (Isaiah 40:28)	Resurrection and Life (John 11:25)
El Roi – God who Sees (Genesis 16:13)	Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4)
El Shaddai – Lord God Almighty (Genesis 17:1)	Saviour (Luke 2:11)
Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6)	Servant (Isaiah 42:1)
Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11)	Shepherd of Our Souls (1 Peter 2:25)
Father (Matthew 6:9)	Teacher (John 13:13)
Friend (Matthew 11:19)	True Vine (John 15:5)
Good Shepherd (John 10:11)	Way, Truth, and Life (John 14:6)
Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14)	Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24)
Guide (Psalm 48:14)	Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)
Head of the Body (Colossians 1:18)	Word of God (Revelation 19:13)

September Prayer Connection Devotional

What Do You Want?

Janice Keats - Halifax, Nova Scotia

Reflecting on God's Word

The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them.

They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

"Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ"). (John 1:35-40)

Then Phillip found Nathaniel and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote." (John 1:45, NIV)

Imagine how the first disciples must have reacted. Jesus invited them to follow along and journey with him. They quickly became attentive and their curiosity was piqued. They wanted to know more about him.

The first thing that Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him that he had found the Messiah. He brought Simon Peter to Jesus. The next day they set out and Jesus found Phillip and said to him, "Follow me."

Then Phillip found Nathaniel and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote." (John 1:45, NIV)

So, what did they all want? We know that when they all came into contact with Jesus they stayed, they were awestruck, and they followed. Was Jesus testing their faith when he asked what they wanted? Jesus didn't ignore them as they began to follow; he became their friend. This was the beginning of the disciples' journey with Jesus. They appeared to be eager followers. Did they tire at any time? Without a doubt!

Maybe we could ask ourselves what we want. Do we want a fulfilling relationship with Jesus? Do we want to follow? Do we want to bring others to him? Do we grow weary in well doing? Perhaps.

Do we also desire to be a friend of Jesus? Do we acknowledge his presence and share his promises of love and eternal life? If Jesus were to ask us what we wanted, what would our answer be? Would we say "I want to follow you"; "I want to know where you are going"; "I want you to love me"?

What do you want?

Worship Meditation

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)

Prayers of Worship

God, what have we done to deserve such love? Even as we ask the question, we know the answer. We have done nothing to deserve your loving grace. We love you because you first loved us.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit -- how we praise you for the vastness of your love. We thank you for the amazing truth that you dwell in our very hearts, empowering and transforming us. We worship you.

September Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Lord, so many people work hard to add goodness to our lives. Thank you for those who improve our lives by their good work in our community and in our country. Keep them safe and productive.

For those who are beginning their work journeys, we ask that you would provide them with the wisdom to be discerning in their job applications, interviews and acceptances. Help them to find jobs that enhance their gifts and talents.

There are many who long to be good workers but just can't find a job. Would you be their guide and the director of their searches? As they look for work, please give them encouragement.

Thank you, Wise God, for our teachers, principals, professors and all who make learning a pleasure and valuable. Please give each educator sensitivity to the good in every student and to the ways to draw out the potential in each one.

We pray for valuable friendships for those in school. We pray for friendships that are fun, supportive and unselfish.

Prayers for Our Ministry

As the fall season begins, our Lord and Saviour, we ask that each volunteer who enables our outreach events to occur will experience the reality of you being a part of all their efforts. Help each to know the power of your blessings upon them.

With grateful hearts, Lord, we come on behalf of those who attend our events. We ask that each heart and life will be open to the love that is shared through the speakers. Help them to realize the wonder of Almighty God loving them.

We pray for those in French-speaking Canada; we pray that each one that joins *mon pelerinage inSPIRÉ* will be drawn into a closer relationship with you. Please allow Jennifer Poirier, French RSVP representative, to experience your grace for her and her family.

Following the ministry of Donna and Rick Lamothe with the Christian leaders in Senegal, West Africa, we ask that the inspiration and guidance they have shared with these leaders will continue to encourage and enable them to boldly share the gospel.

Jesus, living Word, September is often the start-up for Bible studies among those involved in RSVP Ministries. As God's word is read, studied and meditated on, may the studies change lives. We pray that each one who participates realizes the privilege of having your living word actually in their hands.

Other Prayer Topics for a New School Year

- Local schools and universities
- International students
- Education for those without access
- Start-up of Bible study groups

September Planning Team Devotional

The Same Thing

Excerpt from *Leadership Foundations* by Donna Lamothe

"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh," said Piglet at last, "what's the first thing you say to yourself?"

"What's for breakfast?" said Pooh. "What do you say, Piglet?"

"I say, I wonder what's going to happen exciting today?" said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully.

"It's the same thing," he said." A.A. Milne

Leaders might be described differently, look different from one another, and be represented by different personalities, cultures, genders and ages.

Perhaps you think of the charismatic political leader with the big smile and wave – the talented musician creatively and sincerely drawing others to worship; the Rosa Parks of quiet but seismic cultural protest; the captain of your athletic team or the parent leading children at home to maturity and responsibility.

Or you might think of popular spiritual leaders such as Moses, Deborah, David and the myriad of others in the Bible. Moses led with miracles; Deborah with wisdom and prophecy; David with military might.

What other examples of very different but effective leaders and influencers do you think of? Share these names with each other and consider the unique contributions those leaders have made.

Though your position, your scope of responsibility, or your style may be entirely different from the next person, if you are **influencing others towards a united action**, then it is the “same thing”, the thing we call **leadership**.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:28 that leadership is a gift given to some in the body of Christ. There are those who would say that leadership is learned.

Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:

first are apostles,

second are prophets,

third are teachers,

then those who do miracles,

those who have the gift of healing,

those who can help others,

those who have the gift of leadership,

those who speak in unknown languages. - 1 Corinthians 12:28

The leadership basics provided over these next months will speak to all leaders: those gifted for leadership; those who have pursued leadership and those who have had leadership thrust upon them; those with formal influence and those with informal influence and those with many followers and those with few.

Prayer Plan: As you begin a new year, think of those who have influenced or mentored you and give thanks for them. Then spend time praying for those whom you will be influencing this year. Pray for each other to be effective leaders in your various roles and areas of responsibility.

October Prayer Connection Devotional

Precious Opportunities

Marcia Lee Laycock -- Blackfalds, Alberta

Reflecting on God's Word

"Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew,

As the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb.

For I proclaim the name of the LORD; Ascribe greatness to our God!

The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just;

A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He." (Deuteronomy 32:1-4, NASB)

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9, NASB)

That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and declare all Your wonders. (Psalm 26:7, NASB)

I pondered the scripture on a poster in my office: *"Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, As the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb. For I proclaim the name of the Lord: Ascribe greatness to our God"* (Deuteronomy. 32:2, 3 NASB).

I had taken these verses as the theme for my writing and speaking ministry. "May it be so, Lord?" I prayed, as I pulled into the parking lot of the hotel where I was to speak that night.

I was barely in the door to the banquet room when a woman rushed up to me. "I'm so glad you came back! I have to tell you what happened the last time you spoke here." It had been over a year since I had been to that RSVP group. I smiled and invited her to sit with me and tell her story.

"I've been inviting my neighbour to RSVP events for years, but she always had an excuse. After you spoke last year, I bought your devotional book, *Spur of the Moment*, and gave it to her to read. She called me later and said, 'Well, I did it.' It took me a while to realize she meant she'd asked Jesus to be her Saviour! She told me your book answered questions that had kept her from doing it before."

The woman continued, saying, "My neighbour passed away not long after that day. But before her death we read Romans 10:9 together – *'that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'*" She beamed at me. "So I know I'll see her again."

The woman smiled through her tears. I too had tears in my eyes as she finished her story, and I praised God for the opportunities I have through RSVP to *"proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all your wondrous works"*. (Psalm 26:7)

Worship Meditation

So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose.
(Hebrews 2:1-4)

Prayers of Worship

Lord, thank you for telling us the little stories, especially the ones that happen out of our sight when some small thing we did made the difference in the life of another. Thank you that we can share the words of an RSVP speaker with someone else by inviting them to a meeting or giving them a book that explains Jesus to them.

Father, we thank you for ears to hear of your grace and lips to speak of your love. Thank you for eyes to see the marvel of your creation and all that you do.

We praise you, Lord, for inviting us to be part of your story here on earth, and for giving us the opportunity to share with others what you are doing in our lives.

October Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

We give you thanks, o Lord, for the greatest Gift of all -- your precious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for his virgin birth, his sacrificial death on the cross, his resurrection and his coming again.

Mighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, this month when there is a special emphasis on thankfulness, we thank you for this beautiful country of Canada. We see the work of your hands everywhere and we praise you.

Sovereign Lord, we pray for those who rule our country. May our elected representatives be men and women of wisdom and integrity who walk in humility, compassion and justice. Let truth prevail in all they say or do.

We thank you for missionaries that are carrying out the great commission in so many parts of the world. Meet their needs, encourage their hearts and keep them safe. We pray they see results for their labour.

Thank you, Father, for members of the medical profession, who have committed their lives to alleviating suffering. We think particularly of those who are believers and provide care. We pray that they shine for Jesus before their patients and their co-workers.

Prayers for Our Ministry

Thank you, Father, for our Executive Director, Donna Lamothe, and the vision that you have given her for RSVP Ministries. Enable her to clearly hear your voice directing her.

We thank you, Father, for all of the RSVP planning teams that meet faithfully to plan events. Give them wisdom, unity and your love for one another.

Thank you, dear Jesus, for those who create the invitations for outreach meetings. As they are put up in public places we pray that they will be seen by those who are seeking you.

Help us, Father, to plan interesting features that will appeal to those who do not yet know you.

Thank you for our speakers who so openly share their life stories, and for the coaches who help them. We pray for others that you are calling to become speakers. Give them courage and a willing heart to do your will.

We praise you for the wonderful staff and workers who are behind all that happens in RSVP Ministries. Thank you for their dedication to you and to every aspect of this work. We ask for your greatest blessings on them.

Other Prayer Topics for Harvest Season

Farmers and agricultural workers

Environmental concerns

Spiritual harvest

Growth of new believers

October Planning Team Devotional

The Basics

Excerpt from *Leadership Foundations* by Donna Lamothe

There are many directions to go when exploring Biblical foundations for leadership; many books written on the subject; many excellent references and applications. For our purposes at RSVP we'll direct our attention to three things.

In addition to leading his own followers, Jesus had many occasions to speak with religious leaders. It may not have always been his favourite thing to do. Sometimes their attitudes and their motives were at the least impure and at worst, actually harmful and deceptive.

Here is a direct quote from one of those situations.

*"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees? Hypocrites! You are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things."
Matthew 23:23*

When talking to spiritual leaders Jesus refers to three things that are **"the more important things"**. What are the three things?

Given that Jesus is clearly identifying three things as important when dealing with leaders, all of our ears should perk up.

Attention to those three things, justice, mercy and faithfulness, should NOT have been new instruction to those leaders. Scholars agree that Jesus was drawing on 700-800 year old prophecy that God had called Micah to announce to all Israelites. The Pharisees and religious leaders were very familiar with all of the biblical prophecy. Jesus was calling them to live it.

The ironic thing is that Micah's original words were necessary because of the same vice Jesus was addressing. The Israelites were separating faith and worship from just, faithful, loving and merciful living.

We can be familiar with the Bible and yet not act on it. Outside of not knowing what the Bible says, that will be our biggest mistake.

So today, as it was yesterday, the challenge is to live out the more important things, repeated in Scripture through the prophet Micah and through the Lord Jesus.

Micah said it this way.

"O People, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you; to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God." Micah 6:8

Micah specifically focuses on the aspect of reliance on God in the faith relationship, and we'll take our cue from there as we will be exploring these three essentials of leadership, doing right, loving mercy and walking in humble faith.

Prayer Plan: Have each person write down one way that each of these things - justice, mercy and faith; are expressed in our group. Share those with each other and then pray together that as leaders you will maintain your focus on the more important things.

November Prayer Connection Devotional

Does Your Light Shine?

Meryl Bishop -- South Portland, Maine

Reflecting on God's Word

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."
(Matthew 5:14-16, NIV)

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."(John 8:12, NIV)

Jesus said, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."
(John 12:46, NIV)

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8, NIV)

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world and he dispels spiritual darkness. When he returned to heaven, he left us to be his lights in the world. The word "let" in this verse is defined as "allow," "give permission or consent to." It speaks of complete freedom.

I don't have to manufacture the light—I just have to be a container for it. God does not make us his special people merely for our own benefit, but also for those who are still in darkness.

Jesus said, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."
(John 12:46, NIV)

In Ephesians 5:8, we read, *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.*

If you struggle with sharing your faith, the book '*Twinkle*', by Elisa Morgan, is very helpful. In it, she shares how to turn the "I cannot" of sharing our faith into the "I can."

She writes that we must "determine what kind of light we are: a candle, lighting the room around you; a flashlight, clicking on in emergencies; a desk lamp, providing light for people to work by; a headlight, lighting the path for a journey, or a pilot light, necessary for others to be lit."

When lit, we offer just the right light to meet someone else's need in a dark place. Our light makes a difference simply because it is: LIGHT. When we shine, we hold out the Word of life to a world in deep need; we draw others to the source of our hope. Even a single speck of light alters the very nature of darkness. No matter what kind of light you are, you can make a difference. So get out there and 'twinkle.'

Worship Meditation

No longer will you need the sun to shine by day, nor the moon to give its light by night, for the LORD your God will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. (Isaiah 60:19)

Prayers of Worship

Lord, thank you for showing us that we are containers of the light of Christ, totally yielding our lives to him so that others have a chance to catch its brilliance. Show us Lord, anything that blocks your light from shining through us to those who still live in the dark.

Father, you are the one we desire to glorify with our lives and with our praise.

We praise you, Father of lights, because your light shines in the darkness of this world.

November Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Lord, we thank you for all the freedoms we have in Canada, freedoms that many fought and died for. Give us the grace to do our part to keep that freedom light burning.

Thank you for the many pastors that faithfully preach your Word in churches across our land. Keep them strong in you and encourage them as they face many challenges. Protect their marriages and families.

We appreciate your provision of an abundance of healthy food to nourish our bodies. Make us mindful and give us hearts to help those who do not have enough.

We think of Christian young people attending secondary schools, colleges, and universities and ask that they be rooted and grounded in your Word. Give them discernment, as some will be taught by those who do not acknowledge you.

We pray for our neighbours, many of whom do not yet know you as their Saviour. Give us your love for them and enable us to show them your kindness. Draw them to yourself. We ask that we will be salt and light in our communities.

Prayers for Our Ministry

Father, the need in French-speaking Canada is so great. Such a small percentage of people trust you. We know that it is your will for everyone to come to repentance. Thank you for the RSVP material that has been translated into French. Please use it to accomplish your purposes.

You are our Provider. We ask that all the financial needs of RSVP Ministries be met. Thank you for those who give so generously.

We think of the financial coordinators in each Connection group. Thank you for their ability to work with figures and accomplish this task. We ask that they experience your blessing as they do this important work.

We pray that our outreach meetings will be places of great joy where everyone who attends will be made to feel accepted, loved, and respected.

Lord, how we thank you for those who volunteer regionally as chair advisors, speaker coaches, and prayer advisors. We appreciate all the hours and love they invest in this ministry. Will you grant them wisdom, guidance, and joy in all they do.

Other Prayer Topics for this Month of Remembrance

- Justice for those who are oppressed
- Healing for veterans (PTSD and other illnesses)
- Peace among the nations
- Peace within families

November Planning Team Devotional

Foundation One – Do What is Right

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

Leadership and influence are a form of power.

A spiritual leader walking in the ways of Jesus is going to use that power in godly ways. He or she will not use their strength for an agenda of personal gain, but will channel each action and influential moment into what is good and right before God and for the benefit of others.

Note, however, that serving others doesn't mean that a leader will neglect their own well-being. A careless, sick or drained leader will not be a very effective one. Wise leaders who stay in the race until the finish lead from a position of personal strength, but lead to build God's kingdom and to build up others.

So how does a leader do what is "right"?

Right Faith

We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. Romans 3:22-25

What does this verse say to you? Have you believed that Jesus sacrificed his life for you, bringing you into right relationship with God?

- Briefly write down your personal experience of coming into a right relationship with God through belief in Jesus.

The Christian leader leads from this truth.

Every other standard for leadership flows from personal right standing before God, not because of anything the leader has done, but through the grace of God available for everyone who believes, no matter who they are.

When we are right with God we can then call other people to do what is right. The Spirit of God at work in us helps each one of us.

This right relationship, empowered by God's Spirit alive within us, is the foundation and the force that will give us the power, love and discipline to be the leader that God calls us to be.

God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7

Why would power, love and self-discipline be beneficial to the Christian leader?

Prayer Plan: Talk about what other characteristics you would like to ask God for in leadership. Take a few moments in prayer to commit these requests to him.

December Prayer Connection Devotional

Refusing to Show the Way

Donna Lamothe -- Canmore, Alberta

Reflecting on God's Word

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."

King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they said.

Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. (From Matthew 2:1-12, NLT)

If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. (Jeremiah 29:13)

It was Christmas time. King Herod was looking for Jesus. He called on religious leaders, leading priests and teachers of religious law. Surely they would know where to find the newborn king. But they all came up empty. That's interesting because the shepherds found Jesus, and the foreigners, wise men from the east who knew nothing really about Bethlehem, found Jesus. Their intent was worship, and God revealed the location of the newborn Saviour to those who would seek him with sincere and longing hearts.

Jeremiah was a prophet in the Old Testament who wrote that when we seek God wholeheartedly we will find him. This was true for ancient shepherds and astrologers and it is still true today.

Jesus had come to earth as the demonstration of God's love and faithfulness. He would make salvation available to everyone: rich or poor, local or foreign, master or servant.

Herod had intended to harm the Saviour who had entered the world with so selfless a plan, so that his own personal position and status would not be challenged. Herod opposed God and God won the challenge. God frustrated evil and held back truly wise men from showing the way to Jesus. Jesus' short life on earth was protected by God the Father and only when the right time had come would Jesus die for us, accomplishing exactly what he came to do on earth.

Now, you and I have the incredible privilege of guiding those who seek the Saviour to him today. Christmas is a time when many are open to the old, old story, when they might not lean in at any other time. My husband, Rick was one of those seekers who leaned in at Christmas time. My Dad read the Christmas story from his Bible as we celebrated Christmas and Rick's heart turned to the Saviour, eventually receiving the invitation that Jesus extends to each one of us to receive the gift of salvation.

Let's invite those around us to come and hear, see and worship.

Worship Meditation

And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matthew 2:9b-11)

Prayers of Worship

Father God, again and again in scripture you show us that those who seek you with a true heart will find you. You show us that everything happens in your timing. Give us patient hearts to apply that truth to our own walk with you.

Lord, you are the One who sets the stars in the sky and who set your son in a manger. We praise you for sending Jesus to save us.

God of time and God of eternity, you are the God who hides and the God who reveals. You are full of compassion and unfailing mercy. We praise and glorify you today.

December Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Lord, even in this season of light, we hear about so many disturbing situations in the news. We know that you are sovereign in this world and in the lives of your children. Help us fully trust you and face each day with faith, rather than with fear of the unknown.

Holy and loving God, we are already caught up in the worldliness of Christmas. Help us set aside the trappings of the holiday to truly worship you and prayerfully bring others to you.

Loving Saviour, we pray that church programs this December reach the unsaved and set them on the path to Christ.

Righteous Lord, we ask that our community leaders serve honestly, in truth to their calling. We pray that their decisions are made after sound deliberation and thought. Most of all we ask that you give them a heart that seeks you and you alone.

Good Shepherd, today we are mindful of the many newcomers to Canada. Help us reach out to them with the love of Christ.

Prayers for our Ministry

Oh God we thank you for the privilege of serving you by reaching out in our communities to those who don't know you. Help us be compassionate and caring to their needs and offer programs to encourage them to follow you.

Lord, thank you for those who invest in us by leading our group. Please move in the hearts of those you are calling to serve you on our planning team. May they step forward with eagerness to lead using the gifts you have given them. Help each one of us to obey the voice of your Spirit.

Lord of life, some of us are tired from the preparations for the holiday. Give us renewed vigour Lord, so that this month's meetings will be full of energy and passion for the lost in our community

Our Father, remind us to watch out for the new and unsure that attend RSVP. We pray our hostesses will be mindful of those sitting alone, quickly welcome them, and make room for them at their tables.

Thank you for the life-changing Bible studies that we have available and for our new RSVP inLight study on the book of John. Word of God, in this season of light, we pray that the message of Christmas would awaken hunger in those longing for hope. Help them find their way to a Bible study group in their neighbourhood or church.

Other Prayer Topics for Advent and Christmas

New parents

Dark places in our society: abusive situations, addictions, human trafficking

Children in need

Thanksgiving for the beauty and influence of music in our lives

December Planning Team Devotional

Foundation One – Do What is Right

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

Right Through Obstacles

Sometimes we must choose the right but difficult path through challenges and through others' disbelief or cautions.

Are you familiar with the influential 20th century evangelist, educator and author, Henrietta Mears? From the time she was a child, Henrietta had very poor eyesight. Her sight became weaker as she became a teen, exacerbated when she accidentally jabbed one of her eyes with a pin. After high school a doctor told her not to continue with schooling or she might go blind by the time she was thirty.

Henrietta had trusted Christ as her Saviour when she was seven and began teaching Sunday School by age 11. Henrietta felt called to teach young people the Bible in exciting and relevant ways. She knew the Bible would draw young people like a magnet if taught the way it could be. She went to college, determined to learn as much in the classroom as possible in order to limit night time reading. Henrietta graduated from college and began to teach – chemistry and Sunday school.

By 1928 Henrietta Mears was the Director of Christian Education at a local church in California and grew the Sunday school from 400 to 4,000 students. Henrietta wrote material and curriculum for all twelve grades and for college students. She taught them to dream of great tomorrows. Evangelists Bill Bright and Billy Graham were two of the many young people whose lives and ministries were inspired by her.

What do leaders do with obstacles?

Henrietta determined to absorb information orally so that she could reserve her sight for preparation to give her knowledge away. She pushed through and influenced thousands, spurring on leaders who would reach millions.

Leaders don't ignore obstacles, but in light of their calling, faith and resources, move past them.

What obstacles are you facing in leadership? What will you do about the obstacles facing you?

Prayer Plan: Identify an obstacle that you are facing individually and/or as a leadership team. Pray together for wisdom, strength and perseverance to move right through obstacles.

January Prayer Connection Devotional

Bringing People to Jesus

Gloria Edgecombe -- Burnaby, BC

Reflecting on God's Word

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written; 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' ... Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.
(Romans 10:14, 15, 17)

I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little; for I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.
(Philippians 4:12-13)

I first learned about RSVP, formerly Stonecroft Canada, when we were living in Quebec. I was very intrigued and interested by what I heard about Christian Women's Clubs (CWC) and their approach to evangelism. So, when the Lord called us back to our home city of Vancouver, British Columbia, I was excited about the prospect of being able to go to an outreach meeting and see for myself. About a month after our return, a friend invited me to a luncheon and right away she wanted me to get involved, which I did.

We had come back to British Columbia after a twelve-year absence and I felt like I really didn't know anyone anymore. The Lord put on my heart to start a Friendship Bible Coffee (FBC) and invite the moms from my four-year-old son's preschool class. That way I could get to meet people and, at the same time, bring them to Jesus because the Bible says that *Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ.* (Romans 10:17 NASB)

I asked a friend to join me in leading the study and, to our great delight, several ladies showed up for our first Bible Coffee. For most of the women the Bible was a new book, but because of the format of the FBC studies with the page numbers of the Bible indicated, they were able to follow along easily.

As we met together each week to study, our friendships grew, as did their knowledge of the Scriptures. It was just natural to invite them to the CWC luncheon and many of them came. We praise the Lord for those who, through the study and the luncheons, became followers of Jesus, and went on to grow in their faith. Some even brought family members to Jesus as well.

I grew personally through my involvement with RSVP Ministries and the Lord showed me the truth of Philippians 4:13, *I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*

Worship Meditation

The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart. And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. . . . Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
(Romans 10:8-10, 13)

Prayers of Worship

God of our salvation, how we thank you that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that we can come to you through him.

Mighty and Powerful Lord, how amazing it is that you raised Jesus from the dead. We praise you for your promise to give us eternal life through him when we believe in you.

January Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Father, we thank you for our country. We pray for our government, knowing that you are the one who allows the leaders of your choice to be in power.

Tender Shepherd, you are a caring God. There are many places in the world where people are suffering and destitute. Work in those situations so they may find comfort and hope.

Heavenly Father, we pray for elderly people who may be lonely, confused, or ill. Remind them of your love and concern. Help us to reach out to them with care and compassion.

We pray, Lord, for our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. Give him wisdom and understanding to lead our country wisely.

Lord of the nations, may our Governor General, Julie Payette, be a good representative of our sovereign. Grant her safety, health, and a clear mind to fulfill her responsibilities.

Prayers for our Ministry

Dear Lord, we thank you for Donna Lamothe and pray you will continue to grant her health and strength, enthusiasm and joy, as she continues in her service with RSVP Ministries.

Father, we thank you for Shirley Richardson, our National Connections Director. Give her health, safety, and guidance as she provides leadership to RSVP volunteers.

The apostle Paul often urged believers to financially support those who minister. When it comes to the ministry of RSVP, our Provider, give us hearts to support this work with more than just words. Give us open hearts and hands to help financially.

O Lord when we doubt your ability to provide for our needs and the needs of others, we remember Paul who learned to make do with what he had. Give us creative minds to make our 'little' stretch into your 'much'.

Father, we request your blessing on Barbara Fuller as she writes our new Bible Studies. Give her wisdom from the word and time to keep up with all her responsibilities in RSVP.

Other Prayer Topics for a New Year

- New beginnings
- Those who suffer depression, especially seasonal
- Winter travel and weather conditions
- Peace on earth

January Planning Team Devotional

Foundation One – Do What is Right

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

Right Conflict

A spiritual leader does NOT avoid conflict. While some leaders needlessly create conflict, which of course is pointless and harmful to the Kingdom, one of the more common errors of leaders can be conflict avoidance. Have you ever been on a ministry or work team, where one person's behaviour negatively affects the whole group? Typically in that scenario you lose some of the best contributors because the overall experience becomes too negative for them.

It is the responsibility of the leader to deal appropriately with bad or detrimental behaviour in a group or on their team. Of course all of us on teams should address bad behaviour directly (and respectfully), but when that doesn't change anything, the leader must step in.

Jesus brought correction to his leadership team of twelve when necessary and grew leaders who were confident in his love and empowered under this kind of leadership.

Conflict is often approached in one of two ways:

1. In anger, when leaders are so upset that their own approach is a verbal cascade of pent-up frustration. Conflict resolution is then unloving and seeks only to eliminate the problem rather than help the troublemaker understand their impact and correct their behaviour.
2. A prayerful and thoughtful approach from one loving Christian leader to another individual, with the intent of communicating truth and providing an opportunity for learning and change.

Which one sounds like the best approach for a spiritual leader?

We communicate love and respect for another person when we enter conflict in order to resolve a problem AND build the other person up. Jesus brought truth AND healing to the willing.

Now there are times, in situations of abuse, where you simply step in immediately and do what it takes to stop harmful activity or a very bad situation. Jesus did that when he picked up a whip to move vendors out of the temple. They were abusing the poor and repentant traveler seeking God's grace to cover their sin.

There are also times where someone in a conflict will not receive necessary feedback and may respond in anger, blame or disproportionate despair. Leaders will be ready to accept both a positive or negative outcome, knowing they are only responsible before God for their own right action. Perfect outcomes are not always the result. Jesus raised twelve leaders but we all know that one of them rejected the Kingdom way and betrayed him.

But not even the prospect of betrayal could alter Jesus' character. He went to the cross for his followers and his murderers, both. Don't miss this part – he went to the cross! He didn't avoid it.

Jesus went where he needed to go to change the system of sacrifice that was being abused. He didn't avoid the problem, or even stop after resolving the problem in the short term. He made a permanent way for the seeker to find grace. He sacrificed himself to resolve the conflict completely. He did it in agony.

Taking right action in conflict may be painful and costly. Godly leaders choose justice for others, not necessarily for themselves.

Prayer Plan: Is there a conflict situation that currently needs your team's attention? What will you do about it? Start by asking God what he is saying to you about it.

February Prayer Connection Devotional

Love Lifted Me

Shirley Richardson -- Walkerton, Ontario

Reflecting on God's Word:

God told them, "I've never quit loving you and never will. Expect love, love, and more love!"
(Jeremiah 31:3 MSG)

It is the Lord who goes before you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you. Do not fear or be dismayed. (Deuteronomy 31:8 AMP)

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.
(James 1:5 NLT)

"Love lifted me! Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help, Love lifted me!" (Words by James Rowe)

These words from an old hymn encourage my life. When our world turns upside down it's good to remember from past experience – *love lifted me*.

Just before Christmas a year ago our son announced his marriage was over. We saw no warning signs. His three boys were very young. There was no discussing it, no looking at options, just it was over. It turned the world upside down for all of us. Many times when I was down and wasn't sure how to proceed or to process what had happened – *love lifted me*.

In the Message version of Jeremiah 31:3 it says, *God told them, "I've never quit loving you and never will. Expect love, love, and more love!"*

A few short months later my husband had a heart attack. Again, *love lifted me*. We are promised in Deuteronomy 31:8, *"It is the Lord who goes before you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you. Do not fear or be dismayed."* There were so many questions. James 1:5 says, *"If you need wisdom; ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking."*

In the same year my husband totally surprised me when, out of the blue and totally out of character, he suggested we take a trip for my birthday. He knew I'm not one for a party, so he planned a trip - to Israel. *Love lifted me*.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would ever go to Israel! We walked where Jesus walked, we stayed on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, we toured Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives and so much more – *love lifted me*.

Jesus met me there on the shores of Galilee. His love lifted me. It wasn't that I was suddenly able to understand why all this had happened but he showed me that he was and is right there with me. His light, his love never left me and, as I continue to walk in his light, his light is able to shine through me to others. *Love lifted me*.

What do people do when their world turns upside down and they don't know Jesus; don't know his love? Let's commit today to being aware of others around us, to share his love and maybe even invite them to RSVP to the greatest invitation.

Worship Meditation

O Israel, hope in the LORD;

for with the LORD there is unfailing love.

His redemption overflows. (Psalm 130:7)

Prayers of Worship

Shepherd of our souls, how we praise and thank you for the tender and unfailing love you show us.

O God, our comforter; how we thank you that you are there for us in our times of need and desperation.

Lord of the universe, we lift our praise to you, for your plans extend to all peoples. Thank you that the redemption you have provided is available to all who call on your name. We give you glory and praise!

February Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Gracious God, be with all of our MPs and MPPs; guide them to make laws that are for the benefit of all our citizens.

Righteous judge of all the earth, we pray for our justice system, for judges, lawyers and all court officials. We pray that each case be judged fairly and without a waste of time.

Merciful Saviour, be with doctors, nurses, and all those who work in hospitals, nursing homes and clinics. Give them compassion, precision, and a love for their patients.

Mighty God, you are in control of all the earth. We pray for peace in countries where there is war. Protect the children and the helpless in dangerous situations.

Dear Father, we pray for our military and for our police, national, provincial, and in our cities. Protect them as they perform their duties, which can so suddenly become deadly.

Prayers for Our Ministry

Lord, the success of RSVP depends heavily on those who invite people by phone, email and outreach. Give them boldness as they reach out on behalf of RSVP.

God, we thank you for all the people who prepare food for the RSVP events. Give them creative ideas for the food and reasonable prices that fit our budget.

Lord, have we forgotten to pray for anyone? If we have missed specific prayers on the behalf of anyone involved in RSVP, please bring them to mind and give them the peace of knowing that, though we might forget a name, we still prayerfully remember them in our hearts.

Lord, thank you for those who design invitations and table centres, call people, and generally do all the things it takes to make a meeting successful. We pray for every committee member to be encouraged as they work. We pray that others will decide to help so their load will be lighter.

Father, communication is so important. Thank you for Nadine Fafard, our volunteer communications liaison. Guide her as she helps groups with their Facebook page and with creating attractive invitations.

Other Prayer Topics for the Month of Love

- Teen dating relationships, engaged and married couples
- Children of divorce
- Those who are single or without family
- The persecuted church

February Planning Team Devotional

Foundation Two – Love Mercy

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

When our prophet Micah declared that we are to “love mercy”, the word scholars have translated into mercy is the Hebrew word “*hesed*”. It means a faithful, covenant love. It is the expression of kindness that comes with obligations in relationship.

When Jesus referred to mercy in his dealings with religious leaders in Mathew 23:23, he used the Greek equivalent, “*eleos*”. *Eleos*, *hesed* and mercy are the essence and character of God’s treatment of his people and leading in his name means leading from commitment, loyalty, love and unmerited kindness. To be hard-hearted, more concerned with rules than with the plight of people, was and still is incompatible with spiritual leadership.

We cannot be letter-of-the law leaders and also “love mercy”. So how do we lead with this most important value expressed by God in the Old and New Testament?

Give to Need

Towards the end of the 19th century an entire industry of factory workers were suffering from necrosis, a nasty form of bone cancer that was caused by contact with the poisonous chemicals used to make matches. The sides of factory workers’ faces would become disfigured, turning green then black, and be accompanied by a foul-smelling discharge, with the end result a painful death. Most of these workers were women and the young girls who carried the toxic boxes of matches on their heads were bald by the age of 15.

A safe substance to make matches had been invented but it was not being adopted by factory owners. A man named William Booth became an advocate for the use of the new safe substance. He bought a factory in East London and began to make safe matches. Booth’s matches were called “Lights in Darkest England”. His competitors soon felt the pressure, switched to the new ingredients and necrosis was wiped out.

This was the same William Booth that we know as the founder of the Salvation Army. William Booth was a man who “loved mercy”. He was motivated by the plight of those around him.

The best leaders are motivated to meet a need and are compelled to step up!

Why did Jesus feed the multitudes by multiplying the loaves and fish? People were hungry. That was the need. Some leaders would have felt entitled to the available food themselves – nobody had more responsibility or had worked harder. Instead, Jesus used the small food supply to meet the need of the crowd.

If leaders are leading to build their own personal kingdom or reputation then they are not leading from the foundations we are considering here.

What is the need that the ministry of RSVP is meeting?

Why do you lead?

Prayer Plan: Talk about some of the needs that are evident in your community. Ask God to show you how you might reach out either individually or as a group to meet those needs. Pray for those in your community who need to know Jesus, and ask for opportunities to share how Christ can meet their deepest needs.

March Prayer Connection Devotional

A Remarkable Story of God's Grace

Anne Friesen -- High River, Alberta

(Submitted with permission from Mansel and Arlene Jones)

Reflecting on God's Word

His Love - For *this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16)

His Grace - God *saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

His Mercy - *The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.* (2 Peter 3:9)

It was Easter weekend, 1982. Our daughter Arlene, her husband Mansel, and their eight-month-old baby girl were visiting with us. Arlene was a backslidden Christian when she married Mansel, a religious non-believer. Now, three years later, his drinking was out of control. Arlene had decided to take their baby girl, leave her husband and stay with us. But God had a different plan!

At 1:30 AM Arlene woke me up. "What is wrong?" I asked.

"Nothing is wrong. Mansel says Jesus is in his life! He wants to talk to you."

Here is the story. Mansel was in a drunken state on the street in Grande Prairie, when God confronted him! He and his brother-in-law were out walking, discussing "Why do we treat our wives like this?" Suddenly, Mansel felt hands pressing down on his tall shoulders, bringing him to his knees. Mansel wanted to run away or melt into the pavement! At the same time he felt an incredible love as he was totally enveloped by the presence of God! He responded, "Yes, Lord."

Both men were sober when they returned to their wives. Mansel declared repeatedly "Something happened to me!" He insisted Arlene take him to speak with me, his mother-in-law. We had occasionally engaged in spiritual conversations. He asked, "Anne, what is happening to me?"

I replied, "God is touching you, drawing you to him." I shared with him the story from Acts 9 about Saul's conversion. That night in our living room Mansel repented of his sins and surrendered his life to God. We marveled as we listened to our son-in-law pray!

The next morning he said with a smile, "I feel so clean inside. I feel like I've been born again. Yesterday was my spiritual birthday, today is my natural birthday." Our family rejoiced!

Mansel had been a rebel and a skeptic, with no intention of becoming a Christian. He ridiculed and made fun of Christians. Why this miraculous intervention? God is sovereign. He does not need to explain his workings! He heard the cry of our daughter's heart and answered the prayers of family and friends. Mansel was instantly delivered from alcohol. His life was transformed! To this day he and Arlene walk faithfully with Jesus and are a blessing to many. I encourage you all to keep praying for the lost and the straying. It is the Father's will that they be found!

Worship Meditation

This is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God; so that you may know you have eternal life. And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. Since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for. (1 John 5:11-15)

Prayers of Worship

Life-giving God, we thank you that you hear us when we pray.

How we praise you, loving Saviour, for your grace at work in our lives, convicting us of sin and drawing us to you.

We worship you, Good Shepherd, and thank you that you seek the lost sheep who so need you.

As you answer our heartfelt prayers for those we love, we stand in awe of your grace in hearing our prayers, and at your Spirit's working. Thank you, Lord!

March Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

As we approach Easter, Lord, open hearts to be willing to hear your promise from the cross to each and every one of us.

We pray for truth and justice to prevail in our Supreme Courts and in the lesser courts of the land as well. Guide each participant to the best decisions for all.

We appreciate our health care system Lord. Never let us take it for granted or use it inappropriately,

Lord, help us not to be frightened by the headlines of the day. Give us grace and wisdom to understand that no matter how awful the world says it is, you are still the guiding force in it.

We thank you God, for the promise of spring and of better driving weather. As we recover from the winter doldrums, help us to set our hearts and determinedly choose your joy in everything that affects our lives today. Remind us of your joy when we forget that you continually are holding our hands.

Prayers for our Ministry

Father we pray that everyone with children will be able to find safe and dependable child care so that they feel comfortable attending RSVP meetings. Open the hearts and hands of neighbours and relatives who might be able to do this small favor. For RSVP meetings offering child care, we ask that they too find dependable and loving people to fill this role.

Thanks, God, that we are not alone in RSVP ministry but that so many others walk with us in their own cities and provinces. We pray that each of us in our way will effectively share the gospel of Christ in our little corner of the world.

Lord, thank you for the people you are preparing to step into leadership roles in our group. Help us to find your choice for each position and then to encourage them in every way as they serve you.

We pray too Lord, for the women here in our Prayer Connection today. Thank you for their friendship and their continued service in the name of Christ.

Lord, we want to remember all the world areas that RSVP does not yet reach. Bring up men and women willing to obey as you open doors in these distant areas.

Other Prayer Topics for the Season of Lent

- A spirit of repentance
- Persecuted believers
- Disaster relief personnel – floods, fires, crises
- Foreign missionaries
- Bible translation

March Planning Team Devotional

Foundation Two – Love Mercy

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

Give First

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Who took the initiative in reconciling the relationship between God and people? Who gave first and how?

The model that God has provided for us in the area of giving is that of Jesus Christ.

If it is our goal to lead like Jesus, then we must be initiators in giving towards God's purposes.

Often times when leaders come together to organize outreach, help in a community tragedy, or begin a ministry there are costs. These things get underway because someone contributes to offset those costs. This is often a contribution of both money and time, but it could also be services or influence, hospitality or something else.

The leader aspiring to be like Jesus embraces the opportunity to give like Jesus. Here are some ways this might look.

WITHOUT COMPLAINT
WITHOUT EXPECTING SOMETHING IN RETURN
WITHOUT COMPARISON
WITH JOY
WITH GRATEFULNESS
WITH ABANDON

Add your descriptions to this list.

Tony Campolo tells the story of being called upon to pray at a World Day of Prayer event in a large wealthy church. A letter from a missionary serving in Venezuela had been read, describing the need for \$5,000 to build an extension on a hospital. Tony declined the request to pray. Instead he took out all of the cash in his wallet, placed it on the pulpit and asked the chairperson to do the same. After she added her money to his they had \$112.50. Then the remaining 1,000 women in attendance were asked to follow. Once all of the cash had been placed on the altar, collected and counted, there was \$7,000 available to fund the hospital extension. Tony exclaimed "The sheer audacity to ask God for \$5,000 when God has already provided more than \$7,000." (<http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2004/october/15592.html>)

God expects a leader, full of grace and gratitude, to give.

If you find yourself unwilling, tired or resentful of the opportunity to be the first to give, when it is possible, perhaps you are not leading like Jesus.

Prayer Plan: Give thanks for those who are setting an example by their generosity. Pray for the financial needs of RSVP Ministries to be met and ask God what part he wants you to take in that. Pray also for the person who will share 'Our Opportunity' and for people to listen with open hearts and generous spirits.

April Prayer Connection Devotional

Thinking Outside the Boat

Sheila Giguere -- Ramsayville, Ontario

Reflecting on God's Word

Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing." "We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night. At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was.

He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?" "No," they replied.

Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

"Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.

"Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead. (John 21:1-14)

Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" (Matthew 4:19)

You may not think that I would have anything in common with seven men who enjoy spending a night fishing together, but I do. I don't enjoy being cold, wet or sharing a boat with slimy fish but there is so much more to this story. The passage reminds me of being involved with a local RSVP Connection group. The setting is just after the resurrection of Jesus had taken place and His followers were wondering what they should do next. One particular night seven of them decided to spend the night fishing on the Sea of Tiberias.

First, these men worked together as a team, with each one doing their part. As co-workers in RSVP ministry, we pray, plan and work together. We laugh, help and support one another. What a joy it is to be part of a team that is committed to sharing the gospel with those who are not yet believers.

Second, these followers of Jesus went fishing because it was familiar to them and all they knew to do. We too, are doing all that we know. We pray, promote our outreach meetings, and try to plan interesting events.

Third, when Jesus appeared to his disciples he lovingly called them friends and suggested that they do something in a different way. Having not caught any fish all night he told them to throw their net on the right side of the boat. They didn't understand why, possibly had never done that before, but they obeyed and caught 153 large fish. In Matthew 4:19 Jesus tells us to follow him and he will make us fishers of men. Jesus continues to speak to us today and shows us how to bring others into his kingdom. He may ask us to continue doing as we have done in the past but he may be asking us to step out and do something different, something we have never done before.

Worship Meditation

I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. (Isaiah 43:19)

Prayers of Worship

God of new things, we praise you that you lead us in every new situation.

Father, thank you that you give us gifts and also help us to work together for your glory.

Jesus, as you opened the eyes of the blind man, open our eyes to see the new things that you are doing. Open our hearts also to follow you wherever you lead us, even in unfamiliar paths. Thank you that we can trust you in every situation.

April Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Lord we thank you for your promise in Romans 8:28 that all things work together for good to those who love you and are called according to your purpose.

Father God, the news of the world is not encouraging but you are encouraging. Remind us daily to look at you and not the news of chaos and fear that could so easily overwhelm us.

We pray for Christians in government service to walk as you intended, in the footsteps of Christ. We pray bravery and patience for them as they work in a difficult environment.

Renew our minds with the joy of Easter and its meaning. Give us peace as we share the message of Christ with those we encounter day by day.

Lord, we speak out against the evil one and pray that you keep him from gaining any ground in any organizations or ministries that seek to spread your word.

Prayers for our Ministry

Father would you bring encouragement to our RSVP Bible studies? Show their leaders how to present the studies with enthusiasm and wisdom so that the participants draw closer to you.

We acknowledge that social media has drawbacks Lord, but we thank you that RSVP shares the Gospel news on Facebook and in other media. Use this media for your glory, we pray.

Lord, please help our financial workers to be confident as they handle the money. Help them balance quickly at each and every meeting and to know your peace as they serve you in this capacity.

We ask you Lord for first timers as they attend our meetings and pray that they will be more than first timers and, instead, be those you count among the saved.

Father, we thank you for the past year of celebration for RSVP and for Canada. Keep us both on an even keel as we move toward our next big celebrations for Christ and for Canada.

Other Prayer Topics for the Easter Season

Easter celebrations and family gatherings

Pastors as they preach about the death and resurrection of Jesus

Farmers and all who work with livestock

Accountants and bankers during tax season

Those who work with women in need

April Planning Team Devotional

Foundation Two – Love Mercy

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

Give in Love

I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love; neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow. Romans 8:38

May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Ephesians 3:19

There are times when leaders lead from a place of fear – fear of failure – fear of inadequacy – the worry of finances, security or criticism.

Can you think of a leader who leads from their insecurities? Are they the kind of leader you love to follow?

When we introduced the concept to “love mercy” we understood that to mean an expression of kindness and love that goes hand-in-hand with a covenant relationship. A covenant relationship is a permanent bond, embracing shared principles that are honored and acted upon in loyalty and trust.

What if we thoroughly and profoundly understood that our place as a believer and child of God makes us eternally secure? That the things that worry us can never undo that kind of love? Could we then lead less from our insecurities and more from strength and confidence?

According to Romans 8:38 and Ephesians 3:19 (above), what is our place of strength as a believer?

If we are to be powerful leaders, we must find our source of strength in a loving God-experience that is available to us in the deepest valleys and highest hills. And given that it is our source of power, we pass this model of leadership on to everyone else in our areas of influence.

Loving those we lead does not mean that we do not redirect or release them when necessary. In fact those challenging responsibilities may be the most loving thing we can do for someone we lead.

“*Hesed*” and “*eleos*” (loving mercy) reminds us that we lead ultimately from the powerful position of a secure, covenant relationship with God. We can abandon jealousy, insecurity and fear, to influence others in loving ways.

Otherwise, our likely default will be fear-based leadership, where we sacrifice others on our way up the ladder. We might be afraid to fall off our rung and join Jesus washing feet at the bottom, as he is being betrayed.

What are your fears as a leader?

What is the source of your leadership confidence?

How is it obvious that you “love mercy”?

Prayer Plan: In groups of two or three, share the answers to the above questions and then pray for each other. Pray for God's Spirit to help you to be confident leaders whose strength is in God's love.

May Prayer Connection Devotional

That I May Know Him

Seleda Frey -- Listowel, Ontario

Reflecting on God's Word

Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. Suddenly the Lord called out, "Samuel!"

"Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So he did.

Then the Lord called out again, "Samuel!" Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

"I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed."

Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?"

Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'"

So Samuel went back to bed. And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:3b-10)

As I was preparing a Sunday school lesson, a phrase jumped out at me. It was the story of how God called Samuel. In 1 Samuel 3:7 it says "Samuel did not yet know the Lord". Surely Samuel knew about God. His mother had prayed so earnestly for him, and would have told him all about her prayer for a son, whom she then gave back to God. When she left him with Eli the priest, she would have prepared him for that. But he did not yet know God personally.

Possibly we have people at our events like that. Stonecroft/ RSVP, has always placed emphasis on those who may not know anything about God, who perhaps have never had the privilege of hearing the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. But maybe there are also those who have heard and yet they do not yet 'know the Lord'.

One of the members on our planning team had this experience. She says she thought she was a Christian; she even taught Sunday school. Through Bible studies and the speakers at the outreach meetings, she came to realize that she did not have a personal relationship with the Lord. She invited Jesus into her life and is now happily serving on the planning team. Her great desire is for others to come to know Jesus too.

So as we plan and pray for our events, let's not forget those who have head knowledge of God but still need a heart encounter.

What about those of us who are believers? Don't we also need to 'know Him'?

Worship Meditation

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (Philippians 3:8-11)

Prayers of Worship

Loving God, how we praise you that you have revealed yourself to us in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, we thank you that you are our righteousness; and that in you we are free to approach the throne of grace.

Our Redeemer and Lord, we long to know you better and we stand in awe that you call us your friends. Praise you!

May Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

We pray, Lord for your blessing especially for mothers this month; the new mothers, the tired mothers, the mothers who have lost children and those who were never able to have any. Comfort those who have lost their moms. We pray your strength and peace also for all who have the nurturing role of a mother for someone who needs them.

Dear Father, we also pray for the children. Meet their needs, whatever their situation – whether they have special needs or are dealing with bullying, loneliness, divided homes or lost parents.

Lord, give us open doors to step in where a mother or child needs help. Show us financial needs, areas of protection or just plain neighborly casseroles of friendship.

Lord, show us how to overcome the language barriers that separate us from different nationalities in Canada. Remind us that a smile and a friendly face is the beginning of the translation.

Lord it seems trite and trivial to pray for world peace, but we do that because we know you hear and answer prayer. Show us how we can create peace in our small corner of the world, with our neighbours, friends and in our communities.

Prayers for Our Ministry

Lord, we confess that we take for granted that others know God personally. Perhaps we just haven't taken the time to find out. Show us how we too might have mistaken the message of Christ. Help us to hear the Gospel in a new way and to answer your call in a deeper way.

Father, we pray that RSVP leaders will find creative and worthy ways to handle ministry finances. Give them wisdom to determine priorities in ministry as they manage what you provide.

God, we pray for our RSVP Connections in Quebec to be courageous in sharing their faith with others. Bless our French ministry and be with Jennifer Poirier as she connects with new contacts.

We pray for those who travel the country and the world on behalf of RSVP. Give them safety, peace and comfort as they work in sometimes uncomfortable situations on your behalf.

Let us not be anxious as we look for members on the planning teams. Lord, let there be so much enthusiasm for your work that people actually come to us, seeking positions.

Other Prayer Topics for Spring

Summer jobs for university students

First Nations people

World food supply

Artists, musicians and others who create and share beauty

May Planning Team Devotional

Foundation Three – Walk Humbly with your God

Excerpt from *Leadership Foundations* by Donna Lamothe

*Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.
Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.
When he appeared in human form,
he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:6-8*

Can it be possible that this verse is talking about the perfect Son of God? Because if it is, if Jesus gave up divine privilege, was born in poverty and died a Roman criminal's death, then who are we to puff ourselves up as something or someone more deserving than Christ?

Humility must be a function of our faith and leadership.

Walk in Worship

Chris Tomlin was leading worship at a camp in Texas and for four nights in a row he listened to messages on Revelation 4. The chapter describes the response of living beings and elders surrounding the throne of God, repeating the same things day and night; never stopping. Chris was moved by the image and wrote a simple song using the words of the worshippers in Revelation: holy, holy, holy.

Consider the words of the song *We Fall Down* by Chris Tomlin.

If we get worship right, that the one worthy to receive all glory and honor is God, and not us, then we may not have difficulty with humility. If we understand the kind of humility Jesus demonstrated by walking on earth, then we also understand it is not powerlessness. It is the only proper response to God, who created all things.

Is worship a regular part of your Christian experience? How? Read Revelation 4 and respond by asking yourself what an ideal pattern of worship could be in your life. Make adjustments to incorporate this kind of worship in your life today.

We Fall Down
by Chris Tomlin

*We fall down
We lay our crowns
At the feet of Jesus
The greatness of
Mercy and love
At the feet of Jesus
We cry holy, holy, holy
We cry holy, holy, holy
We cry holy, holy, holy
Is the lamb*

After we have worshipped and recognized the chasm that exists between a holy God and our human self, then the natural response is confession. Leadership is tricky. It is hard to be motivated entirely from a pure heart and have no selfish motive at all for success or recognition of our effort and talents. Confession allows us to bring our impure heart to God and find a place to confront it; a loving place, a forgiving place, nevertheless an accountable place.

Confession gives us the chance to trade in what is self-seeking and all sin that will trip us up. In exchange we walk away with a right recognition of the grace of God at work in us and the gift of humility to lead from. Is confession a regular part of your Christian experience? In what way do you practice this spiritual discipline?

Prayer Plan: Find the Chris Tomlin song on YouTube and listen to it together. Then just spend time worshipping God for who he is. You may want to refer to the Names of God at the beginning of this resource.

June Prayer Connection Devotional

Hey, Friend

Karen Erickson -- Orleans, Ontario

Reflecting on God's Word

I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. (Ephesians 3:16)

I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. (John 15:15)

For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)

My Fitbit greets me in the morning with "Hey, Friend!" I must admit that I don't usually consider the Fitbit to be my friend, but I guess it does do things that a friend can do. It reminds me of things I might forget like which day it is, or how much I have been sitting and not taking steps to count.

My experiences with true friends over the past months of life changes and difficulties have led me to humility and gratefulness. As my husband and I have faced new physical and mental challenges, our friends have been there for us. They have driven us to medical appointments; they have hugged us with arms of caring; they have talked with us; they have loved us in so many ways. Mostly they have prayed for us and with us—over a cup of coffee and quietly in their hearts. We feel so blessed and loved.

Those in the world without Jesus in their lives do have good friends, I know. But most often their caring is not empowered with prayer. It is the prayers of our friends that have brought to us the awareness of God's presence. Prayer has given us encouragement, focus and strength. Prayer has given us the assurance that Jesus is also our friend and he is powerfully at work.

I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. (John 15:15)

When my husband was in the hospital recently, there were three other men in the room with him. One was a young man who had to have spinal surgery and was facing unknown difficulties in his young life. He was supported by a loving family and many friends, but he was frightened. During times like this you become 'friends' with those with whom you share a hospital room. How could I be this special person's friend? I could pray. I prayed throughout his surgery and while he struggled to face the unknown future. I continue to pray. When I mentioned that I was praying for him, there was true gratitude in his smile.

For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14)

The hurting world around us needs the power of praying friends too. I am learning that I can be such a friend even to those who can't see my eyes smiling at them.

Worship Meditation

Jesus shouted to the crowds, "If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me. I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark." (John 12:44-46)

Prayers of Worship

Light of the world, you shine in ways that help us to grow and to be transformed. Thank you for bringing us out of darkness into your marvelous light.

Lord Jesus, what an amazing thing to know that you call us your friends. We praise you for your kindness, your goodness, and your tender love.

For the gift of prayer, the warmth of friendship and the power of your Spirit who shines your light in and through us to others, Everlasting Father, we give you thanks and praise.

June Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Father God, we ask for the courage and the wisdom to choose what is right and good for our lives. Help us find the right pathway and step out of the darkness of the world, into a life filled with you, with Jesus, with love, kindness and respect.

As we think of Father's Day, Lord, we thank you for the loving example of so many dads. We ask that you bring healing to any broken relationships so that both father and child will make the effort to celebrate the day in a Christ-honouring way.

Thank you, God that your Word clearly explains how to manage our words so that they encourage, enlighten and strengthen others in their walk with Christ. We pray that through these coming days, you will point out our dividing words and help us replace them with words of healing and wholeness.

We pray Lord, for our sisters and brothers in Christ, around the world. Give them strength to persevere in the times of disappointment, danger and disinterest. Help them to remember that they do not stand alone.

Lord, we pray for all the summer events that people will be attending over the next months. Let parents and children find Christian camps, vacation Bible Schools and other programs to further your kingdom.

Prayers for our Ministry

Father, we are reminded of the men who are stepping forward to serve in RSVP positions. Help them not to be intimidated by the crowds of women that surround them as they serve too.

We pray for outreach meetings held during the summer months when attendance might be down. Give ideas and opportunities for groups to share the kind of meeting that does not fit a winter venue.

We pray for unity in each and every outreach committee; that their hearts would hold only one purpose: the joy of sharing Christ with those who do not yet know him.

Over the past year, Lord, many around the world have come to know you personally. Help them find a good Bible-believing church and so grow in their faith.

Ministry money is tight in the summer Lord, so we ask that you remind our regular donors to continue their donations, even when they are not able to attend meetings.

Other Prayer Topics for June

- Newly-married couples
- High school graduates
- Stewardship of the earth
- Summer mission teams and projects

June Planning Team Devotional

Foundation Three – Walk Humbly with your God

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

Walk Within Limits

The beaver is a Canadian symbol. It's on our nickel and in our ponds. If you've caught sight of one it is likely running or swimming away. While fairly quick to escape on land, the beaver's wide body sort of wobbles on its short legs, which makes it not entirely efficient. Where the beaver really shines is in the water. Its wide webbed back feet and flat tale rudder make the beaver a fabulous swimmer. The things that make the beaver a poor runner make the beaver the Olympian of water sports.

We are each hard-wired to shine in certain places. There are other places where we can manage, but we'll do best operating in environments that give us freedom to use our strong webbed feet and perfect rudder.

Fortunately for the beaver, it is very self-aware. The beaver knows it is most vulnerable on land, and as a result finds safety by building its home with an entrance only accessible by water. Inside, the beaver and its family are safe and dry.

Leaders have strengths and weaknesses, too.

Strong leaders recognize this and seek to operate most often in their places of strength. We grow as individuals and as leaders by pushing ourselves and increasing our knowledge and experience in both areas of strength and weakness. This is excellent. However, it will never mean we are without limits.

Humble and self-aware leaders are not surprised or offended when others identify their areas of weakness. Humble leaders invite this kind of input and recognize that their weaknesses are diminished through awareness. They are more concerned about a blind spot than about exposure.

As a leader sees their own limitations they will draw others who can shine in those spaces. Ideally the leader will build a team that will combine its gifts, talents and resources in ways that are synergistic - where the combined total of every person's contribution, including their own, is greater than the sum of each individual part.

The leader doesn't expect to be a one-man show.

What are your strengths? What is an area of weakness that is best reinforced by others?

God has given limits to the oceans, the length of a day, and each living creature.

Where have you pushed your limits in healthy ways? Where have you pushed your limits in unhealthy ways?

Wise leaders welcome input, feedback and evaluation.

Prayer Plan: As you have identified strengths and weaknesses within your team, take time to pray for one another, giving thanks for the strengths that you see in each other. Ask God to build your team, so that the weaknesses each member has will be offset by the strengths of others.

July Prayer Connection Devotional

The Icks

Brenda J. Wood -- Innisfil, ON

Reflecting on God's Word

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. (Exodus 14:22 KJV)

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. (Exodus 16:2 NIV)

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Ephesians 4:29 NLT)

I laughed out loud when I saw a cartoon picturing the Israelites crossing the Red Sea.

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. (Exodus 14:22 KJV)

There they were in the centre of a major miracle, crossing the seabed on dry ground while banks of water towered over their heads. One person looked down and cried, "Ick! A fish!"

It made me think of the lovely party I had attended the day before. Unfortunately I was seated beside a person with the "Icks". The food was too spicy, her children never visited, and so on.....and so on.....and so on....! She voiced endless complaints to all and sundry.

It only takes one, doesn't it? One grouchy person whose negative comments spoil a party. One undisciplined child who will have what they want, or else.

One seeker of all that is negative can very quickly poison the attitude of a crowd. Only a few months after the Red Sea crossing Moses found himself leading an entire crowd with the "Icks" - each and every one polluted with the spirit of complaining.

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. (Exodus 16:2 NIV)

That's the trouble with one person with the 'Icks'. She very quickly becomes a dozen. Surely none of us have the 'icks', do we? Let's ask God to help us speak encouraging words rather than complaining.

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Ephesians 4:29)

Worship Meditation

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

Prayers of Worship

Merciful Father, we thank you that in your great mercy, you gave us new birth and living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Help us catch that vision instead of looking for herring and catfish on the path. We have nothing to be icky about.

King of Kings, we praise you because you have made yourself known to us and shown us your tender love.

O God who sees us, we thank you that you know our hearts and you can change them. We come before you today, trusting that you will turn us from a spirit of complaint to one of thanksgiving and praise.

July Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

Thank you for the history of Canada, Lord; for a country founded on godly principles. Keep us firmly on that path, we pray.

Hooray, God, that you don't take holidays! You hear and answer our prayers twenty-four seven, day in and day out.

Father, we thank you for the faithful who are ministering around the globe, in churches, missionary service and especially those in dangerous circumstances. Guard them with your mighty power and keep them safely in your service.

We thank you for our armed forces serving around the world. We appreciate all the effort gone before to keep us safe. We ask that you give the pastors and chaplains serving in the armed forces open doors to share the Gospel with our fighting men and women.

Father, we pray for our First Nations peoples and our government - that they might be able to work out peaceful situations for past wrongs.

Prayers for Our Ministry

Father, we pray that you would help us to use well the resources provided by RSVP. Give us courage to try new things and to share the films, books and Bible studies with others.

You, o God, and your faithful praying people lift and carry and hold us through everything that seems impossible. Thank you for being the God of the impossible. We ask help for the one thing in our outreach meeting right now that seems impossible.

Thank you Lord, for those people who willingly share their gift of music at our meetings. Bless their voices, their musical instruments, and their ministry for Christ.

Lord, give us the courage to pray bold prayers for ourselves, our ministry, and our world.

Thank you God, for the feature guests who share their business stories at our clubs. They are a big draw and we appreciate their presence. Open each heart to the gospel, so that they don't miss out on the truth of Christ.

Lord, show me who to invite to this month's meeting. Help me to bravely invite someone outside of my comfort zone and please open their hearts to say yes.

Other Prayer Topics for July

- The nation of Canada
- New Canadian citizens
- Refugees and those who work with them
- Summer travel and safety

July Planning Team Devotional

Foundation Three – Walk Humbly with your God

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

Walk Unentitled

“The minute we think our good works exert a claim on God, we have moved from legitimate contentment to illegitimate boasting” - The NIV Application Commentary by Douglas Moo

There is a form of teaching in some Christian circles that suggest that God owes us a material blessing if we have enough faith or give enough for his Kingdom.

This kind of thinking stands in stark contrast to the human life of Jesus on earth. Jesus' own life does not allow for such a leap to any form of earthly human entitlement. Jesus did everything God the Father asked of him, including being born as a babe in an animal trough. Perhaps we are fooled by idyllic Christmas pictures of mangers, though no mother in this country would want to place her baby in a real one!

Jesus lived to obey, had perfect faith, and was the legitimate owner of everything on earth. Yet he lived in poverty, with no home, no vehicle, pension or even burial plot, and he lived among people who misunderstood him, hated, arrested, beat and killed him.

God does not owe us anything.

What if we - like Jesus - knew that leading, serving and sacrificing would lead to poverty, betrayal and death? Would we lead?

The apostle Peter says to believers everywhere: “. . . *don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you*” 1 Peter 4:12

Christian leadership is not an exchange with God. We don't give him our time, money or energy and then barter for success, security or popularity. The combination of popularity and Christianity got people killed in Peter's day. There are some countries where that would be true today.

If you want to lead like Jesus then you give your gifts as an offering. Period. No demands.

You lead and give all for the glorious purposes of God.

Prayer Plan: What expectations do I have of giving and leading in Christian ministry? Do I expect anything similar to the outcomes that Jesus Christ experienced, or do I make demands for payback from God? Pray together before God for a spirit like Jesus, ready to serve and willing to sacrifice – giving all for the glory of God.

August Prayer Connection Devotional

She's Gonna Fly

Sue Ferguson -- Brockville, Ontario /Cavendish, PEI

Reflecting on God's Word

We know dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own people. For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true. And you know of our concern for you from the way we lived when we were with you. So you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. In this way, you imitated both us and the Lord. As a result, you have become an example to all the believers in Greece—throughout both Macedonia and Achaia. (1 Thessalonians 1:4-7)

"If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'" (Luke 15:4-6)

I heard PEI soloist, Meaghan Blanchard, sing a song called *She's Gonna Fly*. She'd written it for a friend. As she sang, tears streamed down my cheeks. I realized her words described my life.

She agreed to sing it when I shared my life story in September. However, her agent wanted one hundred dollars for her to sing. Having just received a \$100 gift from a friend, I consented without hesitation. I paid it forward willingly, believing this 'coincidence' was truly God's plan for something special to happen.

At Canada Day festivities I met two sisters, who shared their concern about a neighbour in an unhealthy relationship. I invited them to bring her to hear my similar story and Meaghan's song. The sisters were at the meeting but they were really disappointed because their friend had just been admitted to hospital and wasn't able to attend. So they contacted the woman who visited their friend and she came as their guest.

At the end of the message I shared a story about my granddaughter running on the sand. When she fell she avoided getting sand on her hands. Then she saw me, she ran over and raised her arms to get picked up. I asked, if like her, anyone didn't want to get too much of God in their life. Would they look up today and lift their hands to him?

After everyone left, a woman – the guest of the two sisters - still sat alone. When I walked over she said "I think I'm like your granddaughter with the sand. I don't want to get too much of God in my life." We talked and I led her in prayer as she asked Jesus into her heart and life. Miraculously, this woman turned out to be the very friend for whom Meaghan wrote *She's Gonna Fly*!

"If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'" (Luke 15:4-6)

Our sovereign God orchestrated connections to accomplish his will in the life of this one chosen woman. He is willing and able to do that again, so let's pray bold and passionate prayers for miracles just like this one in the lives of the people he lays on our hearts!

Worship Meditation

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Prayers of Worship

Sovereign God, how we praise and thank you that you know and are interested in every aspect of our lives, and that you have good plans for us.

We worship you, Lord, for you are good.

Great is the Lord and his steadfast love endures forever. We praise you for your love, dear Saviour.

August Prayers of Request

Prayers for Our World

We pray, Lord, for areas of hurt in our city, our country, and our hearts. Comfort those who mourn, Father, and give them your peace.

Many of us have elderly folks in our care and Lord, some of us are the elderly. Give us strength to meet and manage the challenges of health and aging.

We pray for teachers and students as they prepare for their return to school and struggle with the usual stresses of a changed schedule.

Prince of Peace, there are so many places in the world where there is no peace. Will you still the strife and bring relief and hope to those who suffer at the hands of violent people? And then Lord, we ask that you soften the hearts of those violent people too.

God of reconciliation, we pray for families and loved ones who are separated by distance, political barriers, work responsibilities or disputes. By your grace, will you reunite those who belong together?

Prayers for our Ministry

Lord, as we prepare for the fall give us fresh ideas and contacts so that our meetings will shine with just the right ideas and speakers and musicians.

Continue, Lord, to use the gifts you've given each of us individually. Give us boldness to step into them and use them to glorify you.

We pray for areas of RSVP Ministries where they need more speakers. Encourage people to come forward to tell their stories. Guide those who train them as they help mould their stories into a solid testimony.

We thank you, Lord, for our regional chair advisors and all the work they do to prepare us for service in RSVP. Where more volunteer leaders are needed, please raise them up.

Help our new committee members to feel a sense of belonging in our group. Give all of us a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we work together.

Father God, never let us falter in your service. Keep us upright and holy in your name.

Other Prayer Topics for August

- Family gatherings
- Rest for the weary
- Those dealing with forest fires and other natural disasters
- Summer camp ministry and leadership training
- God's Word to be shared faithfully in every context

August Planning Team Devotional

The Challenge

Excerpt from Leadership Foundations by Donna Lamothe

“O People, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.” Micah 6:8

Over this past year we have been considering leadership foundations, unpacking these ‘more important things’ that Jesus spoke of: justice, mercy and faith.

The first foundation, to do what is right, had us considering justice and how we do what is right in three ways:

- Right faith
- Right through obstacles
- Right conflict

The second foundation is to love mercy. We explored three ways of giving that mercy entails:

- Give to need
- Give first
- Give in love

The third foundation is to walk humbly with our God. To do so we understand that we are to:

- Walk in worship
- Walk within limits
- Walk unentitled

This is basic instruction for all of us, repeated by Jesus, specifically to leaders.

Before we worry about our great missions, our desired outcomes and our business measures of success, we must ask ourselves if we can walk in the ways of righteousness, love and humility.

What lesson stands out most clearly for you? How are you applying it?

Ultimately, you, the leader, are called to follow. Follow Christ. Follow by acting on his Word.

Apply what is right, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.

Lay your gifts at the altar; walk away with no claims, and leadership will be a delight and its own reward.

Prayer Plan: As you anticipate the coming season, pray that each one of you would be the kind of leader God is calling you to be. Pray also for those in your group whom God may be calling into leadership. Perhaps there is someone you are to mentor and help to step into leadership. Pray for wisdom in these matters.