

A full-page background image featuring a dynamic water splash in the center. The splash is captured in a way that shows the intricate patterns of the water droplets and the crown of the splash. The background is a soft, warm gradient of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene yet powerful. The word "INFINITUM" is centered horizontally and partially overlaid by the splash.

INFINITUM

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INTRO:

THE CREATIVE WAY DOWN

SECTION 1:

SURRENDER

From fighting to being still.

WEEK 1: ENTERING THE WATER

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

WEEK 2: GETTING OUR FACES WET

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

WEEK 3: STANDING IN THE CURRENT

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

WEEK 4: COMING UP FOR AIR

Reflecting on Surrender

INTRO

THE CREATIVE WAY DOWN

WATCH INTRO VIDEO



"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied,
"tell me to come to you on the water."
"Come," he said.

– MATT 14:28-29

WHAT IF WE REALLY FOLLOWED JESUS?

This is a frightening idea, not least because Jesus' own life ended with violence and apparent failure. Why would we wish to follow this example? Yet there is something about his life that continues to capture our hearts. Something integral. Something coherent. Something *good*. Something we want to join in and experience more deeply, even if it disrupts everything else in our lives.

And if we are honest, even if we have been followers of Jesus for a long time, we will likely admit that our experience of a connection to his life can feel shallow. Maybe we have tried some tools for discipleship, accountability, community and spiritual depth. There are some great tools out there, but even the best tools will not build something good if we don't know what we are meant to be building. And if we are trying to build anything that is not from the Lord, we know it will be a waste of time.

This is precisely what is missing in most of our imaginations: a vision of what we were *created for*. A sense of what genuine spiritual depth looks like in the world. A glimpse of a life lived in union with Christ And a trustworthy path that helps get us there.

This is part of the genius of the 12 Step program for Addictions Recovery. It begins with an honest assessment of an unmanageable life and then proceeds to offer a personal and communal journey that will, if taken seriously, help people move into freedom. Every step along the way is reinforced by the living experiences of people who have gone before. The 12 Steps are trustworthy, clear, and provide a

vision for how to live in a new way in the world. What's more, people are encouraged to carry on practicing and going through the steps multiple times, solidifying and deepening the wisdom gained each time. Recovery is understood to be a lifelong process of freedom and connection.

WHAT IF SUCH A PATH WERE AVAILABLE TO THOSE WANTING TO FOLLOW JESUS?

Jesus *has* given us a path, a way. In Matthew 5:1-12 Jesus gives a series of blessings – The Beatitudes – which describe what we were made for and offer a vision for how we can live holy, healthy, and deeply. The Beatitudes are not a program but rather an invitation to join Jesus, step by step, deeper and deeper, into his divinely human life. This is only made possible because Jesus first journeyed towards us in his incarnation, and because the Spirit is powerfully present in us every day. We walk this path with Jesus only by God's grace, power and love for us.

The *Creative Way Down*, based upon Jesus' Beatitudes, is a resource designed to help us on this path.

It is **CREATIVE** because Jesus is making us all into a new creation (**2 Cor 5:17**). This is about a new life, a whole life, a free life, not the half-lives many of us have been living. It is anything but boring.

We recognise that each person's deepening relationship with Jesus is unique, and each of our journeys may look different. Our individual journeys, however, should still be recognisable to other Jesus-followers, because we are after all travelling together with Jesus. There is a **WAY**, a discernible path that Jesus gives us to follow, together. (**Matt 16:24-26**) We don't just make things up and call it discipleship. We submit ourselves and our communities to the revealed and life-giving way of our Lord.

And this way is the way **DOWN**. It is the way of diving *downwards* with

Jesus towards surrender, generosity, and living for others. Ultimately, discipleship means participating in Jesus' self-giving, others-preferring love as we learn the depth of the Father's love for us. **(Phil 2:1-11)**

Ephesians 3:17-19 says: "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." We want to know the width, length, height and depth of this love, not just in theory, but in our own personal and communal experiences. This is the *Creative Way Down*.

THE DETAILS

We imagine this twelve-week process as a deep-sea dive. The ocean is beautiful, boundless, untameable, powerful, and dangerous. It covers much of our planet and supports teeming life, yet we know so little about it. It is a mystery that draws at our imagination, representing adventure, wonder, fear, romance and newness, but we must be very careful and brave to dare its depths. It is as strange and alien an environment as we can find on earth. We can't live in it for more than minutes at a time without help. Any exploration, therefore, does not begin at the bottom of the ocean, but in the shallows.

The *Creative Way Down* likewise begins wherever we are and gradually moves towards the deeper waters, towards immersion in the mysterious, new, dangerous, wondrous and boundless life found in God.

It is divided into three progressive sections, based on the three Infinitum categories of *Surrender*, *Generosity*, and *Mission*. Under each of these headings are three weeks of material, each focusing on one of Jesus' beatitudes. Each three-week section ends with a fourth week designed for taking a deep breath and reflecting on what you have just been through, before you dive back in again. You can do all

three sections – and therefore all twelve weeks – back to back, or you can spread them out over a year or years if you like. And you can keep coming back to these sections as often as you like. We can foresee Infinitum Hubs going through this material, or at least part of it, as often as once a year.

Every week begins with an Infinitum group meeting featuring video teaching on how Jesus inhabits each Beatitude, and how he calls us to join him there. The teaching is accompanied by a half-hour podcast conversation on the teaching (which can be listened to in the group or on your own), and accountability questions, prayers, and a new spiritual practice for each week. The rest of the week includes daily teaching, suggested actions, and prayer and scripture guides for individuals. These are designed for morning, mid-day, and evening interaction every day. You can spend as long as you like in these three daily teaching and prayer times but should probably schedule no less than ten minutes for each. There are also suggested movies, books, and playlists to go alongside the weekly teaching.

At the end of each week there is a debrief in your Infinitum Hub before moving on to the next week's focus. Working through this path together is especially important. Talk to one another during the week, encourage one another, ask questions, and especially pray for each other. Why? Because the way of discipleship was never meant to be taken alone. We were created for spiritual friendship and kinship community, and this has been misplaced in much of our Church experience.

Discipleship is also not meant to be compartmentalised. It includes the whole of each person, body, soul, spirit. It includes the way we form community, the way we act politically and economically, the way we treat our neighbours, the way we love. Discipleship radically affects everything and makes it all new. *The Creative Way Down* should therefore include lots of good music, lots of eating well and eating together, lots of fun, lots of joy. It should also include care and love for your body. Sleep well. Walk. And try to get out in the water. Find a local pool, lake or ocean, and remind yourself what it feels like to be immersed in the water as you immerse yourself in discipleship and

prayer.

Remember, Jesus is calling us to join him. He *wants* us to be with him where he is. It's time to enter the water.

PREPARATION

No one goes deep-sea diving without preparation. Discipleship also requires preparation. Listen to Richard Foster: "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but where, oh where, are those who think of changing themselves? People may genuinely want to be good, but seldom are they prepared to do what it takes to produce the inward life of goodness that can form the soul. Personal formation into the likeness of Christ is arduous and lifelong."

Before you begin the Creative Way Down, ensure that each member of the Infinitum Hub:

- Reads Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), ideally more than once. Familiarise yourself with this revolutionary teaching as best you can;
- Reads the Creative Way Down Introduction and watches the intro video;
- Writes an honest assessment of where their life is currently. This includes prayer, Church, work, relationship, emotional and mental well-being, physical health, happiness, etc...The more you are self-aware and honest with yourself, the more you will get out of this process;
- Compiles a list of things they know, or strongly suspect, are weighing them down: sins, distractions, bad thoughts, unhelpful worldviews, etc.;
- Begins a rhythm of praying, even if briefly, morning, noon and evening. These prayer times will be guided and progressively deepened and lengthened during the nine weeks;
- Arranges to connect regularly during the twelve-week process

with a spiritual director, pastor, or mature Christian friend to give feedback;

- Lets their immediate community know that they are engaging an intense season of discipleship, for the purposes of prayer and transparency;
- Commits to walking this out with their Infinitum Hub, which will mean being in regular contact beyond weekly meetings, and most especially in daily prayer for one another.

None of us will be fully discipled after twelve weeks, or after completing a course. Discipleship is a life-long process of surrendering and being drawn more deeply into the generous life and mission of Christ. At the end of the Creative Way Down we will give advice on how to carry on as individuals and as groups in the way of Jesus. But you should not rush through this guide. Go at your own pace. This is not about finishing a course but setting a course for life.

SECTION 1

SURRENDER

FROM FIGHTING TO STAYING STILL



WEEK 1

ENTERING THE WATER

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

WESLEY'S ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/everyday-disciples-john-wesleys-22-questions – These are 22 self-reflective questions that John Wesley and the Holy Club asked themselves daily. It is recommended as a tool to use alongside Creative Way Down.

MOVIE

The Mission

PLAYLIST

"I Came to Believe" and "Help Me" by Johnny Cash;

"I Shall Not Want" by Audrey Assad;

"Please Be My Help" by Gungor;

"Please Come Home" by Dustin Kensrue

"Still" by Hillsong United;

"Come As You Are" by David Crowder;

"Start Over" by Flame

"Help" by The Beatles

"Build Your Kingdom Here" by the Rend Collective

"My Life, My Love, My All" by Kirk Franklin

BOOKS

The Wounded Healer by Henri Nouwen.

DAY 1

POOR IN SPIRIT

IN INFINITUM HUBS

MEDIA

VIDEO

Jesus the Poor in Spirit: Openness, Vulnerability and Love

PODCAST

CHECKLIST

Ask each other the following questions:

- Do you fear that your life lacks meaning, purpose and depth?
- Do you act in ways you think you shouldn't and/or fail to act in ways you think you should?
- Do you feel guilt or shame over these things?
- Do you feel like your life is inconsistent or compromised?
- Does the world seem too big and complex, and your faith too small and naïve?
- Do you regularly turn to certain habits, distractions, or sins for comfort/escape?

- Do you either shrink into apathy or burst into frenetic activity to compensate?
- Have you tried to change things in the past, but keep falling back into the same habits and patterns?
- Are you consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that you are better than you really are?
- Do you worry about how long you can keep this up before burning out?
- Do you feel distant from God and/or community?
- Are you spiritually exhausted?

How many of these questions resonate with you? Are you aware of a need for a deeper connection to God? Have some areas in your life been highlighted that you want to address? Do you want to find rest for your souls?

ACTION

Take this checklist home and answer it for yourself in greater detail. Write down your answers, and list the distractions, habits or sins you find yourself turning to regularly. Share your deeper answers during the week with one of your Infinitum partners.

PRAYER

Read **Matthew 5:1-12**.

Pray for each other, specifically for the areas that you answered “yes” to in the checklist.

Pray that you would learn to be open and vulnerable with God, with yourself, and with each other.

Pray that you would trust the Lord to help you and deliver you.

Pray that you would learn what it means to be blessed.

STILLNESS

“The lover of silence draws close to God. He talks to Him in secret, and God enlightens him. Jesus, by His silence, shamed Pilate; and a man, by his silence, conquers vainglory.”

– ST JOHN CLIMACUS

Stillness and silence are two of the greatest gifts for our discipleship, and among the least often practiced in our noisy and distracted world. Choosing to stop and be still is a prophetic act. It tells us to stop fighting. It acknowledges that we cannot change our circumstances, or the world, simply through our own efforts. It allows us the possibility of encountering the truth of our own hearts and of being filled by the presence of the Spirit. It is an act of refusing, even for a brief moment, the world’s false comforts and diversions. It is not apathy, nor is it activity. It is remaining still and attentive in the presence of God.

Try this out for three minutes today, and every day this week.

Find a comfortable position, sitting up (not slouching or lying down) and set a timer for three minutes.

Before you start, have each person read out Psalm 70:1 slowly. Use this Psalm to keep your mind and heart attentive and still. Stillness on the outside should be matched by stillness inside. Try therefore not to let your mind run away from you, thinking about things you have to do, anxiety from the day, or other distractions. Instead, when you feel the temptation to worry or to daydream, recall your mind by repeating the verse in your head, or just silently praying, “Deliver me, Lord” or “Help

me, Lord.”

Breathe deeply and begin.

When the three minutes are up read out Matthew 6:5-8, and then pray
The Lord’s Prayer together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins,
as we also forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory
Now and forever, Amen.

Talk about what the experience was like for you. Bring up any fears or concerns you have about being still and silent for longer periods, or anything else from this meeting. Commit to following through on the daily prayers, questions and actions for the week; praying for each other and encouraging one another; and meeting again next week.

DAY 2

FEAR AND TREMBLING

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Gen 3:8-13**.

Most people are familiar with the “fight, flight and freeze” response when it comes to fear. This is the result of a massive, automatic adrenaline dump called the Amygdala Hijack. This adrenaline comes in handy when dealing with a sudden bear attack, but it is less helpful when we are trying to navigate the modern world.

Some people’s fear of the ocean causes paralysis or avoidance. They can’t go anywhere near the water, or even think about it, without shutting down. This keeps them “safe” but also prevents them from experiencing the joys of the water. Others try to hide their fear or draw attention away from it by adopting a fake confidence, essentially trying to “fight” the water. This can be foolhardy. If there are dangers in the water, pretending they aren’t there doesn’t make them go away (ask any Australian). Isn’t it better to know and admit our reality, even if it is scary, rather than stumbling through it blindly?

Adam and Eve were afraid. They knew they had broken relationship with God. They were suddenly and shatteringly aware of their vulnerability and nakedness. And they were filled with shame. In their fear they tried to run and hide from God, tried to keep the truth from

being seen, just as in covering their bodies they tried to hide their true selves.

Feeling fear or anxiety is not sinful. We can feel afraid and still have an attitude of trust in God. But when shame, pain or fear take over this often leads to cover-ups and hiding. We use habits, addictions, and sins to comfort and distract us from the painful truths we don't want to face or feel, and then we try to hide those habits as well. We don't fully trust God to provide what we think we need, or to provide it in the time or the way that we want it, so we run to other things. We fight, hard, against acknowledging the reality of our condition, like a person who refuses to go to the doctor out of fear they might find something bad.

Our culture intentionally reinforces our fears, because people who are afraid and distracted are easier to control and manipulate. Fear creates great consumers of both material goods and political platforms. So, we are constantly sold on the latest distractions and comforts to keep us in a state of dependency and numbness. We are conditioned about who to fight, what to run away from, when to freeze, and how to solve all our problems through the latest purchase.

This perpetual state of fear, both personal and societal, is the opposite of what Jesus wants for us. Poverty of spirit is not a negative thing; after all, Jesus calls it a blessing, a prerequisite for receiving the Kingdom of Heaven. To be poor in spirit is to be free from the enslaving fear of having to be in control of everything inside and outside of us. It is to humbly acknowledge there are some things we cannot control, and to confess that our attempts at wresting control have led to greater harm to ourselves and others. It is learning to trust God for our satisfaction, provision, hope and comfort. It is being emptied of ourselves and filled with God's Spirit, so that we can join Jesus in the joy and the work of his kingdom here on earth.

This fear-driven approach is particularly tragic because we were not made to be afraid. Many of us are familiar with the verse from 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control." But we can look to the first chapter in the Bible to see that we were not made to be fearful and hiding. Gen 1:27 says,

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." We were made in the very image of God! And it is the recovery of this divine image in us – the image that all of creation is waiting to see revealed – that is the purpose of salvation and discipleship.

ACTION

What are your biggest fears and worries? How do you deal with them? What do you turn to for distraction or comfort?

Choose to intentionally limit that distraction this week. If it's your smart phone, for instance, don't take it with you everywhere today. Choose to not look at it during meal times. Don't have it in your bedroom tonight. Take note of each time you unconsciously reach for it, or even long for it, during the day. Use those times to still yourself and ask God for help to face truth and be honest.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the first two words. What does it mean to call God "Our Father"?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 3**.

Step One of the Twelve Steps says: "We admitted we were powerless (over drugs, alcohol, etc...) that our lives had become unmanageable."

Where has your life become unmanageable? Where do you feel powerless? What are you most afraid of? (Consider making a list of your fears). Where does that fear come from? Is it helping you?

Find a place to be still and silent for three minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness, to show you a truth about your heart, and to reveal God's love for you.

Use Psalm 70:1 as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for three minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the three minutes are up, pray through **Psalm 3** one more time.

EVENING

Read 1 **John 4:15-19** and **Matthew 6:25-34**

Consider this quote from Karl Barth: "I am not the Judge. Jesus Christ is the Judge. The matter is taken out of my hands. And that means liberation. A great anxiety is lifted, the greatest of all. I can turn to more important and more happy and fruitful activities. I have space and freedom for them in view of what has happened in Jesus Christ."

Did you experience any fear today? What did you do? Do you have hope that you will know a freedom from fear? Bring your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 3

HONESTLY

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Isaiah 6:1-8** and **Luke 5:1-11**.

It is important to be honest with yourself about your swimming ability before treading out into deep waters. Sometimes it is helpful to have other people with us to reflect the truth about us that we would rather not see.

In the above passages both Isaiah and Peter encounter the Lord and respond with strikingly honest self-awareness. Their immediate reaction is to announce their "uncleanness" or "sinfulness", and to assert their unworthiness to stand before a holy God. In Isaiah's case a terrifying angel starts flying towards him with a huge burning coal, likely confirming the suspicion of doom in Isaiah's mind. But the coal, far from being punishment, is used instead for atonement and cleansing. In Peter's case his confession is met by Jesus' gentle response, "Don't be afraid." In both Peter and Isaiah's stories they are subsequently commissioned to become God's messengers.

We are afraid to be honest, often because of expected punishment or rejection. And there are serious consequences to our behaviours that we must sometimes face. But we do not want to be motivated, or constrained, by fear. The best way to overcome the things that enslave us – and the fears that they create in us – is to bring them out into the light. Poverty of spirit is not about cowering before things that are

scary, it is about accepting who we really are and trusting that God still loves us and wants us to be free from all that enslaves us and keeps us from him. What's more, he has the power to set us free. But we can't receive that freedom if we refuse to see or acknowledge our need for it. We must be honest with ourselves, as honest as we can be, or we can go no further.

This is tough, because we all have our blind spots. It is why community is so incredibly important to learning poverty of spirit. Ruth Haley Barton says: "In community, others become agents of God's troubling grace, giving us many opportunities to see ourselves more clearly, to repent and confess our sins one to another in order to receive grace and healing....coming face to face with our weakness and being honest about it opens us to the gift of community and also releases God's power among us, within us, beyond us."

Ask God therefore for the clarity to see what you cannot see about yourself; the wisdom to admit what you would rather not admit to yourself; the courage to let others in your community speak truthfully and honestly into your life; and the hope that God's response to our honesty will set us free from fear.

ACTION

Ask two to three people in your life – people who love you, and whom you trust – to tell you something honest they have observed about you. Ask them to help you get to a "truthful seeing" about yourself, to see those things that you may be blind to. It can be something encouraging, it could be constructive criticism, or it could be a difficult word of correction or even rebuke. But it must be honest. When they have done this, thank them, and then take their words and weigh them. Do you believe what they said to be true? Was it surprising, or something you knew or suspected already? Did it hurt? Pray about it and ask God if He thinks it is true. If it is, ask God what you are meant to do about it.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the second phrase. What does the name of God mean to you?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalms 139:1-18**

Consider making this prayer from Thomas Merton your own:

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will

does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

Are there areas of your life where you are dishonest with yourself, or with others? Are there times when you could honestly say, "I have no idea where I am going," and "nor do I really know myself"?

Does it comfort or concern you that God knows you perfectly well? Why?

Find a place to be still and silent for three minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness, to show you a truth about your heart, and to

reveal God's love for you.

Use **Psalm 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for three minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the three minutes are up, pray **Psalm 139:23-24**.

EVENING

Read **1 John 1:5-10**.

How honest you were today with yourself and others? Did you exaggerate, divert, or hide at all? If so, why? Bring your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 4

HUMBLE PIE

MORNING

REFLECTION

Listen to "I Shall Not Want" by Audrey Assad:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8WgHGOak1c>

Read **2 Chronicles 20:1-12**.

There is a story of King Canute of England in the 12th century, who placed his throne on the beach and commanded the tide not to rise. When the tide refused to obey his royal decree, and his throne got soaked, Canute is reported to have said, 'Let all men know how empty and worthless is the power of kings, for there is none worthy of the name, but He whom heaven, earth, and sea obey by eternal laws.'

The story could be made up. But the statement is true. Anyone who gets into the ocean and feels the power of the waves knows they have no real power over them. How much less do we have full control over our lives, or over God?

This calls for deep humility. There is a danger when we talk about humility that it turns into self-loathing. But humility, as C.S. Lewis put it, is not thinking less of yourself, so much as it is thinking of yourself less. Another way of thinking about humility is that we agree with what God thinks about us. God loves us, he wants us to be with him, he encourages us and calls us to our best. But he also knows that we are not God and that we need help.

Humility is an essential part of poverty of spirit. When we uncover the honest truth about ourselves there is a temptation to react with justification, defensiveness and rebellion. This will only dig us further into self-centeredness. The other option is to have our hearts softened and ready to be changed. Humility is the prescription for dealing with the pride that gets in the way. It is a posture that we take before God and others. We agree with God that we are not God, accept that we may be wrong, and ask God's help make things right. Then we practice this over and over again, in all circumstances, and in all our relationships. We start to pay attention to the harm that our behavior has caused ourselves and others.

In the story above from 2 Chronicles the King and the nation of Judah were in serious trouble. They had no realistic way of fending off the horde arrayed against them. From this position of powerlessness they called out to the Lord through a fast and a solemn assembly, and Jehoshaphat uttered the vital line: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." What an incredible thing for a king to admit! I can do nothing here to save myself, but I believe – I hope – that you can, oh Lord.

What if we were to adopt that posture every day, every morning? We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you.

ACTION

As much as you reasonably can, embrace silence today. If someone insults you, don't respond. Avoid social media (which can be a dangerous place for trying to make ourselves look good) and entertainment (which is often noisy and distracting). Listen to other people when they talk today, without trying to figure out the next thing you want to say. If you must speak, ask questions. At the end of the day reflect on how this approach affected you and others around you. Was it frustrating? Liberating? Humbling? What hidden feelings and thoughts rose up?

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "deliver us from evil". What trouble might you need deliverance from today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 131**

Try to make this prayer from Mother Teresa your own:

Deliver me, O Jesus:
From the desire of being esteemed
From the desire of being loved
From the desire of being honored
From the desire of being praised
From the desire of being preferred to others
From the desire of being consulted
From the desire of being approved
From the desire of being popular.
Deliver me, O Jesus:
From the fear of being humiliated
From the fear of being despised
From the fear of being rebuked
From the fear of being slandered
From the fear of being forgotten
From the fear of being wronged
From the fear of being treated unfairly
From the fear of being suspected
And, Jesus, grant me the grace

To desire that others might be more loved than I
That others might be more esteemed than I
That in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I decrease
That others may be chosen and I set aside
That others may be preferred to me in everything
That others may become holier than I, provided that I, too, become as holy as I can.

Which phrases of this prayer do you find most difficult to pray? Why?
How does your pride get in the way? What person or group do you find yourself consistently looking down upon? Could you pray the last part of the above prayer for them?

Find a place to be still and silent for three minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you what humility looks like.

Use **Psalms 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for three minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the three minutes are up, pray **Psalms 131** one more time.

EVENING

Read **Luke 18:9-17**

What did humility look like for you today? Did pride interfere anywhere?
Bring your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 5

HELP!

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Acts 9:1-19**

AA Step 2: "We came to be aware that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

If you have ever been rescued by a lifeguard after finding yourself in deeper or rougher water than you could handle, you will understand Step 2 of Alcoholics Anonymous a little better. Sometimes we need to admit that we are in over our heads and desperately need help.

Saul/Paul is portrayed as a confident, zealous, perhaps prideful man when we are first introduced to him. He is completely sure of himself and his convictions, to the point where he is quite happy to take his persecution of Christians on the road. We may be familiar with the story of his encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus, but we should pay close attention to what happens afterward. Blinded by the Lord, Saul requires help to get into the city safely, and then needs the prayers of Ananias, one of the Christians he had come to arrest, to regain his sight. This had to be a humbling encounter for Saul (not to mention a scary one for Ananias). Saul begins his life of following Jesus by being rebuked, blinded, and then reliant upon the help of others. But this whole sequence was direct, tangible evidence to him of his need for God, and of God's ability to save. It is from this that Saul can say, "the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20)

We need to be ready to admit that we need help. We especially need to confess that we cannot accomplish our salvation or discipleship on our own. We need the Lord's help to restore the image of God in us, which is the purpose of our creation. We typically reflect every other image in the world: materialism, violence, partisan politics, celebrity, family, culture, advertisers, school, denominations, and whatever else we can get our hands on. We don't know who we are or what we are supposed to be doing, we just suspect that life is unsatisfying and everything we try leads to nothing. If we want to be free from that chaos then we need outside help. Asking for God's help is a huge part of what it means to be poor in spirit.

God wants to help us. He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28) What is more wearying or burdensome than trying to go it alone in deep and troublesome waters? Let us accept that we are blinded and need the Lord's help and guidance to lead us into safety and sanity.

ACTION

Confess to someone you trust - maybe one of your Infinitum partners - an area where you need help and strength. Maybe it's a feeling of being overwhelmed, a skill that you lack, or a shame or sin that you can't seem to shake. You aren't necessarily asking for the person to fix things for you, just acknowledging your need for outside help. Start by confessing this to yourself and to God.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "give us this day our daily bread." What is the help you need from the Lord today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 6**

Reflect on the lyrics to Gungor's song, "Please by my Strength", or listen to it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX0bhq6FM5g>

I'm looking for a place
Where I can plant my faith
One thing I know for sure
I cannot create it
And I cannot sustain it
It's Your love
That's keeping me
Please be my strength
Please be my strength
I don't have any more

Where are you most aware of your need for help and strength? Do you find it easy or hard to ask for help?

Find a place to be still and silent for three minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness, to show you where you need help, and to reveal how God longs to be your help and your shield.

Use **Psalm 70:1** or one of the lines from the song as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for three minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the three minutes are up, pray **Psalm 6** one more time.

EVENING

Read **Luke 5:27-32**

Where did you need God's help today? Did you ask for it? Where did you need help from others? Again, did you ask? Bring your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 6

I SURRENDER

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Matthew 19:16-26**

There is a big difference between wading in the shallows and committing to a swim. You can wander around at the shore line without getting your clothes wet, enjoying the idea of swimming and the general concept of the ocean, but the decision to go deeper requires an act of surrender. You have to let something go, in this case being dry, safe and warm on the shore.

Giving up stuff is hard. We grow very attached to our possessions, our habits and routines, our thoughts and worldviews. But there is no way forward without surrendering these attachments to God.

Attachment and addiction are not just about drugs and alcohol – we can be attached and addicted to any number of things, including comfort, convenience, power, systems, and relationships. Addiction is always bad, an enslavement. And part of the necessary answer to this enslavement is detachment from the objects of our attachment. We sometimes think this means a freedom from desire, a devaluing of things or people, or a devaluing of desire itself, but that is not it. It is not freedom from desire but freedom of desire that we are looking for – free to live in the love for which we were created.

Importantly, this isn't a negation of material things. It is not about destruction, but transformation. When we yield our attachments we open

ourselves to the possibility of interacting with them in a new, healthy and holy way. The things of this world are not bad, they are just not meant to be idols or snares to us. Things that have been corrupted can be made new, if we submit them to God.

It is why Jesus spoke the way he did to the young man. He wanted to set him free from the attachments that held him back, and so transform him and his wealth into a blessing to the poor. His attachment to wealth was standing in the way of his loving the poor and his loving God. Jesus, loving him, wanted him to be liberated. But he could not surrender and so he could not join Jesus in his way. He could not accept the possibility that God's love for him could outweigh his protection of himself. Poverty of spirit means surrendering our self-defense and self-sabotage and trusting that God's love for us is enough.

ACTION

Is there anything you are holding onto – it could be material, or a worldview, a bitterness, or a habit – that is holding you back from following God? Wesley asks this question: "Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?" If you can answer yes to this question, make a start on surrendering today. If it is a material object, can you give it away? Or put it away? If it is a worldview, bitterness or habit, can you name it and ask God to break your attachment to it? Can you ask for the strength to commit to surrendering these things and becoming free, no matter what it takes? Let one other person know what you want to surrender and have them keep you accountable by asking you how you did at the end of the day (and in days to come).

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the

phrase "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." How will you pay attention to the will of the Lord today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalms 25:1-11**

Step 3 of the 12 Steps says: "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

The prayer associated with this step is this: "God, I offer myself to You – to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of Life."

What do you find difficult to surrender? What excuses do you give yourself to hold onto things, ideas, desires, fears, grudges, or sins that you know you should let go of? Have you ever been able to successfully let something go? What did that take?

Find a place to be still and silent for three minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you what God wants you to surrender, and to show you how much Jesus surrendered for you.

Use **Psalms 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for three minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the three minutes are up, pray **Psalms 25:12-22**.

EVENING

Read **Matthew 4:1-11**.

What were you called to surrender today? Was it easy, difficult or impossible to do? Bring your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 7

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Phil 2:1-11**

We can determine the weight of something by measuring the amount of water it “displaces.” This is how huge warships are often measured. We see this principle at work when we get into a full bathtub and the water level is raised around us. The amount of water displaced when we enter the ocean, however, is too small for us to notice any difference.

The kingdom of heaven is vaster than any ocean, but there is an impact when we enter in: all of heaven rejoices. If we want to talk about “displacement” however, we need to look at what happens when the kingdom of heaven enters us.

Rich Villodas says, “I wonder if the reason many in the church struggle in our witness is because we haven’t preached repentance (or repented) deep enough. We often preach behaviour modification, by which we call people to live respectable lives. But repentance is the full turning of ourselves to God.”

This involves laying down everything, every thought that we are self-sufficient, every back-up comfort we carry, every secret sin, every hope and scheme that is not grounded in Christ. It means admitting

that we cannot do it ourselves and embracing our weakness. It requires understanding that God is God and we are not, he is judge and we are not, he is saviour and we are not. As hard as this is, it is also incredibly liberating. It is the open door to the blessing of the poor in spirit. The kingdom of heaven must displace whatever other kingdom we have going on inside.

This does not mean our identity, personality, or individuality disappear. In the strange (to us) kingdom economy, the more we are filled with the Kingdom of heaven, the more “ourselves” we become. We actually see this happen in the person of Jesus. Philippians 2:1-11 tells us that Jesus made himself nothing, humbled himself and took on the nature of a servant. And God exalted him to the highest place, giving him the name of glory and honour. We are exhorted to have this very same mindset. We give up our lives, yes, but in so doing we find our real life in Christ Jesus. (**Matt 16:25**) This is getting at what it means to accept the kingdom of heaven as a little child. (**Matt 18-2-4**) We get low, so that God can raise us up high. I let go of the “Kingdom of Me” so I can take hold of the “Kingdom of Heaven”.

ACTION

Read **Matthew 8:18-22**. Take some concrete steps to empty yourself of unhelpful distractions, false comforts, and unhealthy attachments. If it is a material object, bury it in the ground, throw it in the river, or burn it in the fireplace. If it is a sin, habit or worldview, write it on a rock and piece of paper and get rid of it. This may be surprisingly hard to do as our attachments – the things we use to hide our chaos, numb our pain, and direct our desires – tend to go very deep. So, enlist a friend to help. Tell them what you are doing and ask them to join you. This is simply to indicate that you want to be emptied of the things that are not of the kingdom of God, so you can be filled by the things that are. Your action here may not end your struggle, but it shows (to yourself) that you are serious and that you want to live in a way that is free, that is motivated by love and not fear or habit.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord’s Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase “Thy kingdom come.” What might the kingdom coming into your activities today look like? What might it cost you?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalms 145:1-16**

“God gives where he sees empty hands.” St. Augustine

Where are your hands currently full? What are they full of? What would it take to empty them? What do you think God wants to put in your hands?

Find a place to be still and silent for three minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven inside you and all around you.

Use **Psalms 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for three minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the three minutes are up, pray **Psalms 145:17-21**.

EVENING

Read **Matthew 13:44-45**

"In baptism nobody is invited to come up with their own personal statement of belief. All are invited to be immersed into a reality beyond themselves and to join their individual voices to a communal voice that transcends them all. " (Ben Myers, The Apostles' Creed – Guide to Ancient Catechism)

How have you begun the process of emptying your hands and being immersed in the kingdom of heaven?

Take some time to write a reflection about this past week. What stretched you? What did you learn? How will you continue to apply the disciplines you explored this week? Were you totally honest with yourself and others? Bring these reflections to share with your Infinitum group.

Bring your day, and your week, to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

WEEK TWO

GETTING OUR FACES WET

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN,
FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

WESLEY'S ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

Continue using the 22 Daily Accountability Questions from Wesley's Holy Club.

To go even deeper see William Booth's resource, "How to be Saved": <http://www.salvationfactory.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/How-to-be-Saved-PR.pdf>

MOVIES

Manchester by the Sea; Dead Man Walking

PLAYLIST

"Tears in Heaven" by Eric Clapton

"Does Your Heart Break?" and "Dust We Are and Shall Return" by The Brilliance

"It's Not Enough" by Dustin Kensrue

"Friends and Family" by David Ramirez

"The Reason" by Hoobastank

"I Was Wrong, I'm Sorry and I Love You" by Derek Webb

"Repentance" by 116 Clique

"Hurt" by Johnny Cash / Nine Inch Nails

"You Will Be Found", Dear Evan Hansen Broadway Production

"Create in Me a Clean Heart" by Keith Green

"Awake O Sleeper" by Jeremy Camp

"Beautiful Things" by Gungor

"O Mary Don't You Weep" by Aretha Franklin

BOOKS

Prophetic Lament by Soong Chan Rah;

Prophetic Imagination by Walter Brueggemann;

Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament, by Rebekah Eklund;

Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels, by Francis Taylor Gench

THOSE WHO MOURN

IN INFINITUM HUBS

DECOMPRESSION

Share with one another how your week went. What questions, actions, or topics were challenging? Did you encounter anything new about yourself? Did you encounter God in any new or unexpected ways? How did this focus on poverty of spirit affect our experience of community? Share some of your answers to the questions from the week and pray for one another.

STILLNESS

"The deeper your interior silence, the more profoundly God will work in you without your knowing it."

– FATHER THOMAS KEATING

Talk specifically about how your times of daily stillness and silence went. Were you able to discipline your thoughts and recall your mind when it wandered? What helped? What made it difficult? Were there any thoughts or feelings that came up that you think were from the

Holy Spirit?

Read out **Matthew 5:1-12**

Spend five minutes of silence and stillness together. End by praying the Lord's Prayer.

MEDIA

VIDEO

Jesus Wept

PODCAST

ACTION

Write a list of people close to you that who have died and whom you have mourned. What is your way of mourning? Where did you learn it? What does our culture teach us about death and mourning? Do you mourn differently for different people? What "good" does mourning do for you? Write this down and then map out the way you would like to be mourned and remembered when you die. Share this with your hub.

LAMENT

Read out **Matthew 5:21-30**

We have adopted many ways of dealing with our own fear and pain, and ways of dealing with the chaos and heartbreak of the world. Anger and Lust are two of our common temptations that Jesus addresses in the Sermon on the Mount, but there are others.

There is a biblical way of processing and walking through pain, doubt, fear, sorrow, and regret, and it is called lament. It is a way of faithfully addressing God while being totally honest about our anger, disappointment and sadness. Roughly 45% of the Psalms are laments, more than the number of praise Psalms. Lament typically begins by addressing God with a complaint and a petition. They it gives God a motivation for action (For the sake of your name! Because you are merciful!) and concludes with an expectation that God will hear the lament and respond with help. A people who were in exile, in danger, surrounded by enemies and at times on the brink of extinction needed to be able to pray in this way. They also needed to be able to look back on their history and lament the kind of behaviours, actions and thinking that got them into some of these predicaments.

This week you will be encouraged each evening to look back on your day, your week, or even your life and offer lament. This will include addressing injustices that have happened to you or to others, but also sinful behaviour in which you have participated. The goal is to learn to include godly sorrow and mourning into our understanding of faith, discipleship and worship.

Read out Luke **18:35-43**, and end with praying the Jesus Prayer together, each taking a turn:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Commit once again to praying for each other and encouraging one other regularly as you engage in a week of mourning, lament and divine comfort.

WORLDLY SORROW

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **2 Corinthians 7:5-10**

The ocean is dangerous. The wrong approach to it can very quickly lead to death.

An unhealthy approach to our pain, fear and sorrow is also dangerous. The World Health organisation estimates that approximately 300 million people around the world suffer from depression, and close to 800,000 people die of suicide each year, about one person every 40 seconds. There is also a growing understanding of addiction as a self-medicating response to unprocessed pain.

We are going to spend two days in the 2 Corinthians 7 passage this week, because it illustrates the godly sorrow and mourning that leads to life, as opposed to the kind of worldly sorrow that leads to death. The context for this passage appears to be the Church in Corinth's response to a stinging rebuke from Paul in a previous letter. He called them out on something, and they had some options for dealing with that: defensiveness, hiding, and self-hating worldly sorrow, or godly sorrow and repentance. Throughout the chapter you get the sense that Paul understood the risk he was taking in speaking such hard truth to them. He initially regretted that he had caused them grief with his letter and was clearly worried about how they would respond. He knew that worldly sorrow does not lead to good and godly ends.

Worldly sorrow is dangerous because it is pain and grief that does not lead to repentance. That kind of sorrow will often lead us to bitterness and self-pitying, or to self-destructive behaviour. Self-medicating through distraction or addiction only pushes the pain and grief deeper. It will eventually come out.

Another way of describing worldly sorrow is pain and grief experienced over the consequences of sin, but not over the fact of sin itself. That is, we are afraid or angry because our sin is exposed, but we do not grieve the sin for its own sake. This may lead us to deflect that grief onto the circumstances; or onto the person who exposed us; or even onto the people we hurt. Anything but own our sinful condition. This is not godly sorrow, not the kind of mourning with Jesus that leads to our comfort.

None of this is meant to condemn, just as Paul's letter to the Corinthians was not meant to condemn. It is meant to help move us from hard-heartedness towards a soft heart; from fighting to defend ourselves to being still in the presence of the truth; from worldly sorrow that leads to death, to godly sorrow that leads to repentance and life.

ACTION

If you are having thoughts about hurting yourself, or if you are suffering from depression and/or self-hating thoughts, please connect with someone you trust right away and let them know. And if you know someone who you think is going through something like this, don't wait for them to contact you. Get in touch with them right now and ask them how they are doing. Let them know that they matter to you.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "lead us not into temptation." What is that temptation today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 38**

In the Holy Club's daily accountability questions we find this: "Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?" That is, is my reaction to pain, grief, or correction focused on self-defence and self-comfort? Or am I open and vulnerable to Jesus' way of speaking into my situation?

How would you answer those questions for yourself? How do you react when faced with hard truths? Is your heart hard or soft? Are you quick to acknowledge wrong-doing, or do you try to deflect and defend?

Find a place to be still and silent for five minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you where you have succumbed to worldly sorrow.

Remember **Psalm 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for five minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the five minutes are up, pray **Psalm 38** one more time.

EVENING

Read **Hebrews 3:7-18**

LAMENT

Where has your heart been hardened by worldly sorrow today, or in the recent past? How did this cause harm to yourself or to others? Are

there any truths you still do not wish to face? Ask God to soften your heart and to teach you how to lament.

End your lament with the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Bring your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 3

GODLY SORROW

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **2 Corinthians 7:5-13a**

When we learn to swim, the first time we voluntarily put our heads under the water is a life-changing moment. Even as little children we know the seriousness of this act. We are choosing to leave the air behind and plunging into a world we cannot control. We hold our breath, trusting that we can come back up for air, that the water won't destroy us, and that this is a necessary part of going deeper.

So far in our discipleship process we have acknowledged our fear, our chaos, our need for help. We looked yesterday at the dangers of worldly sorrow in response to truth. We are now at the point of voluntarily putting our heads underwater and looking honestly at our lives, without the protection of self-pity or self-justification.

Here is what the 20th century monk Thomas Merton had to say about this searching and fearless self-questioning:

"Underlying all life is the ground of doubt and self-questioning which sooner or later must bring us face to face with the ultimate meaning of our life. This self-questioning can never be without a certain existential 'dread' - a sense of insecurity, of 'lostness,' of exile, of sin. A sense that one has somehow been untrue not so much to abstract moral or social norms but to one's own inmost truth. 'Dread' in this sense is not simply a childish fear of retribution, or a naive guilt, a fear of violating taboos. It is the profound

awareness that one is capable of ultimate bad faith with himself and with others: that one is living a lie." (Thomas Merton, Contemplative Prayer, 26)

This is not about fear of consequences, but about a profound self-awareness and the acknowledgment of failure, weakness, deception, and bad faith. When we look that reality about ourselves square in the face and refuse to turn away, refuse to distract or numb or escape, the most natural, appropriate reaction in the world is to mourn. To grieve. To flood our beds with tears, as the Psalmist does in Psalm 6.

It is difficult, but important, to sit in this place of godly sorrow for some time. That doesn't mean wallowing in misery, but it does mean allowing ourselves to experience the weight of sin and grief. Even when we do allow ourselves to feel some godly sorrow, our temptation and tendency is to rush through it towards resolution as quickly as we can. We want to apologise and move one before we are even fully aware of what we have done or why we have done it. But this does not really help us, because it does not fully open us to truth.

But let us be clear: our grief and penitence do not save us. Only Christ does that. Godly sorrow simply means that our hearts have become soft enough in response to truth that we can begin to receive the comfort Jesus promises us. This is essential, because godly sorrow in and of itself is not the end of the story. As we see in Paul's letter, it is a means to other ends: earnestness, longing, zeal, and vindication. And ultimately, as Paul says, to "repentance that leads to salvation without regret."

ACTION

Step 4 of the 12 Steps says: "We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." Begin to do this today. Think through different seasons of your life and write down undealt with sins, bitterness, and resentment from those seasons. Try to be thorough. This will take more than one day to do.

Here is a guide from AA you can print out to help you work through this

process, if you are looking for more direction: https://12step.org/docs/Step4_Inventory.pdf

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "forgive us our sins." What might it mean to mourn your sins today as you ask for forgiveness?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 32**

"We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Searching and fearless. Those are powerful, even intimidating words. Do you feel searching and fearless as you confront your internal truths, or the harms you have caused? What can give you courage as you carry on with this moral inventory?

Find a place to be still and silent for five minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you an area of your life that requires godly sorrow. Ask him also to give you courage.

Remember **Psalm 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for five minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the five minutes are up, pray **Psalm 32**.

Read **1 Corinthians 5** and **2 Corinthians 2:1-11**

LAMENT

Where have you seen sin, bitterness and resentment fester and grow, either in your own life or in your Christian community? Do you grieve this sin? Do you have the courage to deal with it, and the hope that God can forgive and bring reconciliation? Can you trust God with it, even if it hurts?

Close your time of lament with the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Give your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

KINDNESS AND REPENTANCE

REFLECTION

Read **Romans 2:1-4**

The ocean doesn't care about you. This is the clearest example where the metaphor we have been using for discipleship breaks down. The sea isn't out to drown you, but if you should drown it would not be bothered in the slightest. Not so with God. God calls us into a journey that requires us to die to ourselves, yet God is drawing us out into the waters because he loves us and wants us to be free. Unrepented sin prevents us from receiving all that God has for us, so repentance is a necessary, liberating part of the creative way down.

For many people the primary imagery that is associated with the word "Repent" is a loud, possibly frothing-at-the-mouth street corner evangelist with a large sign that urges passersby to "Turn or Burn!" That approach may be considered effective, even perhaps necessary, in some scenarios, but it is not particularly winsome. It is certainly not the picture that comes to mind when we think of the word "kindness".

But this could perhaps be because we mistake "kindness" for "niceness". Jesus never urges his followers to be nice. Being nice is not one of the fruits of the spirit. And the call to repentance, such as we see made very clearly in Romans 2, is not nice. It is a hard word. But it

is also kind.

Romans 2:1-4 is an exhortation not to judge others, not because sin is no big deal, but because judgment often self-excuses the very same sins that we have committed. At issue here is what Paul describes as “contempt for the riches of God’s kindness, forbearance and patience”, which are all meant to lead us to repentance. God is patient with us, because he wants to give us every opportunity to turn away from sin and towards him. This is the comfort he wants to give to those who mourn. How could we have contempt for that?

Consider these words from William Barclay: “The word grace emphasizes at one and the same time the helpless poverty of man and the limitless kindness of God.”

We should embrace our poverty and not downplay it. But we should also be careful not to neglect, downplay, or take for granted the limitless kindness of God, which is always calling us towards repentance and life.

ACTION

Continue working on your searching and fearless moral inventory. Spend at least ten minutes today listing off the areas in your life where you can identify sin, bitterness and resentment. And talk with one other person who has done this kind of thing before, if you can.

Here again is the guide from AA if you need it: https://12step.org/docs/Step4_Inventory.pdf

PRAYER

Pray The Lord’s Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the

phrase “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” Is there any judgment or lack of forgiveness that you need to confess and deal with today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 51**

Listen to the song “Create in Me A Clean Heart” by Keith Green:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vD847UcRbL4>

How has God been kind to you? How has he been patient with you? What would it look like for you to fully turn towards God right now?

Find a place to be still and silent for five minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you the depth of his kindness and patience towards you.

Remember **Psalm 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for five minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the five minutes are up, pray **Psalm 51** again.

EVENING

Read **Matthew 7:1-5**

LAMENT

What are the logs in your eye that God is calling you to lament and

repent? How have you judged others while still justifying your own behaviour? Have you taken God's kindness and patience for granted? Ask God to show you how he has been kind towards you, and how he wants you to turn to him.

Close your time of lament with the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Give your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 5

DEAD MAN'S FLOAT

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Matthew 16:24-28**

Some people are naturally good at floating, while others of us tend to sink like heavy rocks. One of the first things you learn in swimming lessons is how to do a Dead Man's Float: "a prone floating position, used especially by beginning swimmers, with face downward, legs extended backward, and arms stretched forward." It is one of the scariest postures to adopt as a novice swimmer, and the name doesn't help. Yet it is in fact a life-saving posture which, if practiced correctly, can keep you afloat with a minimum of energy. Whereas if you thrash about in an effort to save your life you are far more likely to tire and drown. To learn the Dead Man's Float is to learn to live.

In the passage from Mathew 16 Jesus gives his disciples the most counter-intuitive instruction imaginable: to save your life, you must lose it. And you must lose it by picking up a cross and following Jesus to his execution. This was not a spiritual metaphor for Jesus' followers living under the Roman authority, even less so when they witnessed Jesus go to his death. Is this really what Jesus means?

Paul spells out the death-to-life paradox even further in **Romans 6:1-14**, which would be good to read right now.

Union with Christ means sharing in his death. This is the only way to share in his resurrection life, which is the blessed life he promises in the

Beatitudes. This means that we cannot be content with just tidying up our lives a bit, altering certain behaviours and adding certain practices. Discipleship requires dying to ourselves so that we can live with Christ. It means truly mourning our past enslavements and attachments because they are really dead.

But while the mourning is real, let us remember that it is not for the sake of misery that Jesus blesses us. This is a good gift. Hebrews 12:2 advises us: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." This does not deny the cost of the cross, but it emphasises the joy that was set before Jesus as he gave himself in fullness to the Father. This can be our joy as well. Paul, again, sums it up in his famous statement: "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil 1:21)

Whatever it is that God is calling us to surrender, can we see it as a joy? Can we imagine the greater riches that God has for us in Christ as we "throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles"? (Heb 12:1) Can we learn to die, joyfully, with Christ, and so to live?

ACTION

Continue working on your searching and fearless moral inventory. Spend at least ten minutes today listing off the areas and relationships in your life where you can identify sin, bitterness and resentment. Circle those areas you think will be the most difficult to deal with, the hardest to die to. Ask God for special grace to be courageous as you learn to surrender to his will.

Here again is the guide from AA if you need it:
https://12step.org/docs/Step4_Inventory.pdf

One other thing: if you can manage it, try to get to a pool or body of water and practice your dead man's float (Maybe stick to shallower water for this). Let it remind you of what a posture of surrender feels like. It is

yielded, but it is also freeing.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "your will be done" as you go about your life today.

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 13**

"Jesus sees that only those who mourn will be comforted. Only those who embrace the reality of death will receive new life. Implicit in his statement is that those who do not mourn will not be comforted and those who do not face endings will not receive new beginnings... only grievors can experience their experiences and move on." (Walter Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 57)

What "experience" are you nervous to experience? What "death" in your life have you been dreading? What are you terribly reluctant to relinquish?

Find a place to be still and silent for five minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you what needs to end in your life, so that something new can begin.

Remember **Psalm 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for five minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the five minutes are up, pray **Psalm 13**.

Read **Luke 9:57-62**

LAMENT

One of the most searching and difficult daily questions from John Wesley's Holy Club is this: "Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?"

In other words, am I still trying to justify a certain way of living or thinking that, deep down, I know is not pleasing to the Lord?

Sit with this question, honestly looking at those areas that your conscience highlights to you. Is there something else that you need to let die today, something you had hoped might go unnoticed? Can you mourn that too? Ask the Lord for his help to lament and mourn that which should die, so that you can be more fully free.

Close your time of lament with the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Give your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

WEeping AND COMFORT

REFLECTION

Read **John 11:1-37**

Deep water brings danger, but it also brings comfort. There is a reason we flock to the ocean with our families on vacation, why surfing and scuba diving are so popular, and even why physical therapy often takes place in the water. We are more weightless in the water. It is the closest thing we can get to flying, to relieving ourselves of carrying our burden with only our own strength.

Weeping also helps relieve our burden. It is a gift, a healthy response to sorrow and hurt, a cathartic experience that can help us process our tension and grief. One of the saddest things we can do to people is shame them for their tears. Many people in addictions have a hard time weeping because drugs and alcohol shortcut or numb our pain response, and when people have experienced trauma that numbing is the most natural and understandable response. In Addictions Treatment some people find themselves weeping all the time, almost as if their hearts are trying to catch up with lost time.

Jesus knows what it means to cry. The verse "Jesus wept" is well-known for its brevity, but it should be better known for its gravity. The idea of the Creator of the universe weeping over the death of his friend

is astounding. It should shake us to our core. It is the full humanity of Jesus on full display, and it forever dispels the notion that emotions are weak.

Jesus weeps, even though he is about to bring Lazarus back from the dead. He cries because he loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and as he stands outside the village he is confronted by the sisters' grief and accusation. Jesus does not hide from the sting of this pain; he does not excuse himself from the world's weeping at the unfairness of loss, but nor is he daunted by it, not even by death itself.

Behind all our sinful behaviours there is brokenness. We have been hurt, inevitably, by circumstances, by accidents, by people we love, by our upbringing, by enemies, etc. We mostly haven't learned how to deal with this pain, so we seek comfort wherever we can find it. This is where Mary and Martha are at in this story, grieving and scared and angry. Jesus is right there to bring them comfort, but Lazarus' dead body is lying there, making any comfort seemingly impossible. This is why Jesus keeps pushing at the edges of their belief: do you believe that I am the resurrection and the life? Mary and Martha are teetering on the precipice of this belief, hoping against hope in the very face of their sorrow, while others around them have nothing but accusation and disbelief.

Where do you stand in your faith? Does pain, death and loss cause you to run to your temporary comforts and attachments? Does it lead you to accusation and disbelief? Or can you see it as the place where you might encounter the living God who wants to bring you true comfort?

ACTION

Make a list of the pain and grief you are experiencing (or have experienced) and try to connect this pain to the habits or sins that are on the other list you made this week. Can you see any places where they overlap? Behaviours you have run to out of brokenness and fear? Try to be as detailed and as thorough as you can.

IMPORTANT: Please do not walk through this process alone, especially if you have experienced trauma (physical, emotional, spiritual) in your life. Seek out pastoral assistance, the help of trauma counsellors, a spiritual director and/or community supports as you go through this important but difficult work.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "give us this day, our daily bread." What comfort do you need from God today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 126**

"Jesus knew what we numb ones must always learn again: (a) that weeping must be real because endings are real; and (b) that weeping permits newness. His weeping permits the kingdom to come." (Walter Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 57)

How is God bringing you comfort in mourning? Do you believe that God is able to comfort you, and that he wants to? What new thing do you suspect, or hope, that God wants to bring about in your life through your weeping?

Find a place to be still and silent for five minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you the comfort that comes through mourning.

Remember **Psalm 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for five minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the five minutes are up, pray **Psalms 126**.

EVENING

Read **James 4:7-10**

LAMENT

Wash your hands and put water on your face as well. Look at yourself in the mirror and ask if there is anything in your life that needs to be mourned and purified, or any place where you need comfort in your brokenness and pain. Consider asking God for the gift of tears, the gift of weeping.

Close your time of lament with the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Give your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

DAY 7

LAMENT AND LIFE

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **John 11:38-44**

There is a magical moment that happens when learning to surf. At first, the waves are menacing and overwhelming. They are uncontrollable, fearsomely powerful, and the thought of catching one at the right time, letting alone riding it, seems beyond ludicrous. The waves buffet you and smash you into the sand, and sometimes you get so caught in the roiling current that you don't know which way is up and which is down. You get big gulps of salty water; your board gets ripped out of your hands; and you get exhausted. But if you stick with it, eventually you start to feel the rhythm of the waves. You start to recognise, just a little, what the swells are doing. You almost catch one, furiously paddling away with your arms, and as you do you catch a taste of what it is like to move in concert with the ocean.

And then, it happens. The wave hits, you judge it correctly, and you are racing towards the shore with the speed and power of the sea. You still do not control it, and there is a long way to go before you can even stand reliably on the board, but now you can experience the tide in a whole new way. For most people, that is all it takes to get hooked on the beauty of surfing.

It seems that something like this is happening with Mary, Martha and Jesus (and Lazarus!) in this passage. The sisters are in deep mourning,

overwhelmed and bruised by the profound loss they have experienced. They are disappointed with Jesus' previous absence and confused and appalled by Jesus' bizarre command to roll away the stone. This is Jesus drawing them deep into the waters of faith. He previously asked if they believe he is the resurrection and the life, and Martha said yes. But do they believe that he is the resurrection and the life right now? Here? Standing outside the smelly tomb?

Do we believe it? Many of us are waiting for heaven for everything to be made right, and while there is an element of truth to that, what if we could join Jesus in his "resurrection and life" blessing here and now? We can't control God or many of the circumstances that lead to grief and death, but what if we could experience God and the world in a totally different way? What if we could move in and through lament with the power of Christ? Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." He also says, in Acts 17:28, "For in him we live and move and have our being."

This does not mean we won't experience pain and death, nor eliminate our need to mourn and lament. But it transforms the way we do it. Instead of letting pain drive us to our numbing distractions and sins, we can learn to wait for God's comfort in the "unforced rhythms of grace." (Matthew 11:29, MSG) We can start to recognise this gracious rhythm of God and learn to ride with it rather than trying to fight it. And we can even start to know joy in the middle of sorrow. This is the gift of Jesus' blessing to those who mourn, that they will be comforted, both now and in eternity.

ACTION

Continue to work on your list of the pain and grief you are experiencing (or have experienced), connecting this pain to the habits or sins that are on the other list you made this week. Start putting the lists together and drawing lines connecting the pain and the behaviour, if you can. Make sure you bring this to your Infinitum meeting to share.

IMPORTANT: Please do not walk through this process alone, especially if you have experienced trauma (physical, emotional, spiritual) in your life. Seek out pastoral assistance, the help of trauma counsellors, a spiritual director and/or community supports as you go through this important but difficult work.

(Also, make some plans to try surfing if you can!)

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory." How might you experience a foretaste of that kingdom, power and glory today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 16**

David Bennett has said: "If only we had eyes to see how beautiful God is. All our lusts, vanity, idols, heart-break, burdens, shame, guilt all come from one essential defect: to be unable to see with the eyes of one's heart the beauty of our Creator."

Is there any place in your life where you can only see heart-break, burden, shame, guilt, death? What would God's comfort to you look like in that place? Where have you noticed the beauty of the Creator, in a way that might change the way you experience life's hardship?

Find a place to be still and silent for five minutes. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you something of the beauty he has in store for you.

Remember **Psalm 70:1** as a help to recall your mind if it starts to

wander.

Set a timer for five minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the five minutes are up, pray **Psalms 16** again.

EVENING

Listen to the song “You Will be Found” from the Evan Hansen soundtrack.

Read **Romans 12**

LAMENT

Consider this quote from Brené Brown: “The lesson is simple: Don’t look away. Don’t look down. Don’t pretend to not see the hurt. Look people in the eye. Even when their pain is overwhelming. And, when you are in the pain, find people who can look you in the eye. We need to know we aren’t alone – especially when we are hurting.”

How have you looked away? How have people looked away from you? What would it look like for you to refuse to look away? What would a community that refused to look away from one another look like?

Close your time of lament with the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Write a reflection about this past week. What stretched you? What did you learn? How will you continue to apply the disciplines you explored this week? Were you totally honest with yourself and others? Bring these reflections to share with your Infinitum Hub.

Give your day to the Father in prayer and thanksgiving.

WEEK THREE

STANDING IN THE CURRENT

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK,
FOR THEY WILL INHERIT THE EARTH.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

WESLEY'S ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

Continue using the 22 Daily Accountability Questions from Wesley's Holy Club

MOVIES

Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace; Silence

PLAYLIST

"It is Well With My Soul" by Audrey Assad

"I Shall Not be Moved" by Mississippi John Hurt, or Bruce Springsteen (or both!)

"Bridge Over Troubled Water" by Aretha Franklin or Simon and Garfunkel (or both!)

"Stand Up/Stand N Rock" by Taboo

"Still" by Hillsong Worship

"More Heart Less Attack" by Need to Breathe

"Heaven is Around Us" by Stu Garrard and John Mark McMillan

BOOKS

Letter from Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King Jr;

The Non-Violent Cross by James W. Douglass;

The Violence of Love by Oscar Romero

DAY 1

THOSE WHO ARE MEEK

IN INFINITUM HUBS

DECOMPRESSION

Share with one another how your week went. What questions, actions, or topics were challenging? Did you encounter anything new about yourself? Did you encounter God in any new or unexpected ways? Share some of your answers to the questions from the week and pray for one another.

LAMENT

Talk about your experience with lament this week. Were you able to think of things to lament each evening, and to faithfully and honestly bring them before the Lord? Was it easy or difficult? How did this practice change the way you remembered and thought about your day? How did it effect the way you dealt with the pain of your own life and the pain of the world around you? Continue practicing lament at the end of each day this week.

MEDIA

VIDEO

Jesus the Meek

PODCAST

STILLNESS

Read out **Matthew 5:1-12**

Spend seven minutes of silence and stillness together. End by praying out this prayer from the Wesleyan tradition together, which is going to be a daily prayer this week as we contemplate meekness:

"I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will,
place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things
to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Awareness Examen is an ancient Christian exercise that helps us recall the events of our day and notice where God was present with us. This is scheduled for every evening going forward, so spend some time familiarising yourself with this exercise. The 5-step guide below was written by Andy Freeman from 24-7 Prayer (www.24-7prayer.com/blog/2451/how-to-examen-our-lives)

STEP 1: BECOME AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

Take some time to remember that God is present with us in our everyday lives. He has been near to you and with you throughout the events of your day. Perhaps use a cross or image to remind you of His presence with you.

STEP 2: REVIEW THE DAY WITH GRATITUDE

What are you thankful for? What were the gifts of the day? What did you receive from others? What did you give to others? How has God been at work? Where was God? In conversations? In the actions of others? in the events of the day? In nature? Was He speaking? Perhaps He was shouting out His goodness in the morning sunrise? Or perhaps you saw Him in the kind actions of a friend?

STEP 3: PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR EMOTIONS

St. Ignatius emphasised how through the movements of our emotions we can detect the presence of God. Reflect upon the emotions you felt throughout the day: anger? jealousy? compassion? boredom? joy? What might God be saying to you through these emotions? Perhaps there's an area where you need to seek forgiveness. Maybe you were

you frustrated by an unwanted interruption? or responded in anger? perhaps you resisted God's nudging to offer someone help. Is there a way you could reach out to that person?

STEP 4: CHOOSE ONE THING TO PRAY FOR

Maybe there's something that particularly stands out to you? It may be a particular conversation or event, or an emotion you felt. Pray about it.

STEP 5: LOOK TO TOMORROW

How do you want to live differently? How can you become more aware of God's presence and promptings and the gifts of the day. Perhaps carry something with you throughout the day to remind you of God's presence with you.

DAY 2

SAND OR ROCK

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Matthew 7:24-27**

Watch this short National Geographic video of the 2011 Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWzdgBNfhQU>

How could anyone ever stand in the way of such power and devastation? Jesus says that there is a way to stand firm when the storms and floodwaters rage against you. It is listening to his words and doing them. A house built on the rock of his teaching will not be moved. A house built on the sand will not survive the storm.

Standing firm in the face of hurricane-force winds and waves is not the typical imagery that springs to mind when we hear the word "meekness". We think of a pushover, a coward, a shy, retiring type who would rather keep the peace than cause a fuss. But this is not meekness. Meekness, rather, is power under control. It is the stable middle ground between excessive anger and apathy. It is choosing to act, or to not act, out of the knowledge that you are God's beloved and nothing the world can throw at you will change that. It is living as if the kingdom of heaven is the true reality, and the storms of this life, while real, are still only temporary. Their tumult and fury pale in comparison to the might of the Lord of the wind and the waves.

There is a reason the blessing of meekness comes after the blessing of mourning. When we encounter the true devastation of the world, the

reality of death, and the weight and grief of our own sin, the temptation is to rage or to quit; to try to fight the world or to give in to the world. Neither option is best for the believer. We are called, simply, to stand. We don't have to wrestle the waves or the wind, nor do we have to be overwhelmed the storm's ferocious power. We stand on the rock of Jesus and we trust that this foundation will keep us from collapse.

ACTION

Go out to a busy public place – a mall, or a busy street – and stand still for awhile. Observe the hectic motion all around you, the people rushing to get places, the traffic, the noise, the distraction. Try to take at least 10 minutes to stand motionless, paying attention to what the world is trying to get you to do, and what your own mind/heart is wanting you to do. Is it what God wants you to do?

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "on earth as it is in heaven." What if you lived your day according to the reality of the kingdom of heaven?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 62**

Consider again this prayer:

"I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."

What, if anything, frightens you about the requests in this prayer? What gives you hope within the prayer?

Find a place to be still and silent for seven minutes, and try standing during this time if you can. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you both the storms that surround you and the rock on which you stand.

Remember a line from the prayer above as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for seven minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the seven minutes are up, pray Psalm 62 again.

Read **Ephesians 6:10-20**

LAMENT

Consider where the storm raged fiercely in your life today, and if you felt overwhelmed. Bring it as a lament to the Lord.

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Step 1: Become aware of God's presence

Step 2: Review the day with gratitude

Step 3: Pay attention to your emotions

Step 4: Choose one thing to pray for

Step 5: Look to tomorrow

RESTING IN THE BOAT

REFLECTION

Read **Matt 8:23-27**

There is a remarkable story about a group of German Moravians on a boat crossing the ocean that happened to also be carrying John Wesley. Here are Wesley's own words:

"Every day had given them occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth. There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the Spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger, and revenge. In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the main-sail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on."

The Moravians were meek in the face of insult, injury, and danger, because they knew they belonged to Jesus. It was not that they thought the water couldn't kill them. They just knew that even if they died they were safe and secure in the arms of the Lord. It is why one of their nicknames was "The Saviour's Happy People," which is a pretty

good one to have, even if it is meant as an insult.

When Jesus falls asleep on the boat with the disciples, and remains asleep in the middle of a storm, he is embodying the words of Psalm 4:8, "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety." Sleeping and resting is the ultimate display of vulnerability and meekness, which is one reason the Sabbath is so important for God's people. We declare by our resting that the world's storms pale in comparison with the goodness and power of the Lord.

The disciples, like us most of the time, aren't fully living out that faith. The Lord of the wind and the waves is in their boat, sleeping, but they are still afraid. The Lord of all the earth and heavens is with us, as well, in every circumstance, but we are often still afraid. So, we do our best to save ourselves, to turn the wheel of history by our panicked action, when God is ultimately calling us to trust him and to rest in him.

ACTION

Find some time to intentionally rest today. Choose to not do something that you would normally do in response to crises or conflict. Maybe choose not to respond to emails today, or only during one short window. Or choose to not argue back with someone. Or let a bunch of people ahead of you in a line for something. Or drive the speed limit, refuse to cut in traffic, let other drivers merge without getting furious, and keep the radio off. Instead, breathe. Take a nap (not while driving). Go for a long, slow walk. Have a hot bath. This is not about self-care, it is about meekness, about saying that neither God nor the world need our frenetic action. God is sufficient, and the kingdom is in good hands even if we take time to rest and be still.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does

anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." How are you tempted today to save yourself or others through your own actions?

MID-DAY

Pray Psalm 23

This familiar Psalm bears careful exploration. What are the promises God is offering? What is the situation of the Psalmist while those promises are being offered? Where, for instance does God set a table? Where is the Psalmist walking? Do you expect to be removed from trouble, or given courage and stability in the midst of it?

Consider again this prayer:

"I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,

Praised for you or criticized for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.

And now, O wonderful and holy God,

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,

you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."

Find a place to be still and silent for seven minutes, and try standing during this time if you can. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you how to rest and be at peace in God's presence.

Remember a line from the prayer above as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for seven minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the seven minutes are up, pray **Psalm 23** again.

EVENING

Read **Exodus 20:8-10** and **Mark 2:23-28**

LAMENT

Is there anything to lament about your attitude towards rest and Sabbath? Have you been able to receive God's loving gift of inactivity and peace?

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Step 1: Become aware of God's presence

Step 2: Review the day with gratitude

Step 3: Pay attention to your emotions

Step 4: Choose one thing to pray for

Step 5: Look to tomorrow

DAY 4

STEPPING OUT OF THE BOAT

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Matthew 14:22-33**

Where does your confidence come from when you walk out into the ocean? Is it your swimming ability? Your knowledge of the terrain? The fact that there are others in the water? Safety signs on the beach? Lifeguards?

If you came across an unfamiliar patch of ocean, with no signs on the beach, nobody else in the water, and no lifeguards, how confident would you be venturing out into the current?

How confident are you with new relationships? New work scenarios or social situations? New challenges, hardships and trials? Again, the word "meek" is usually associated with a lack of confidence. But it requires great confidence to be self-controlled, to refuse to give in to fear by running or lashing out, to face the storms of life.

In the story above we see the confidence, and therefore the meekness, of the disciples being tested. Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen and should have felt confident in a boat. But they find themselves buffeted by the waves and the wind and in trouble in the chaos of the open water. As frightened as they are by the wind, however, they are far more frightened of the man walking towards them

on the water, which is quite fair. They move quickly from natural peril to supernatural terror. Walking on the water was something reserved for God (see Job 9:8; Isa 43:16; Psalm 77:19); even Moses had to wait for Yahweh to part the seas for him to walk through. The disciples' terror then is not just related to seeing a person doing what a person cannot do; it is related to the dawning realisation that they may be in the presence of someone quite a bit more than human. Throughout the Gospels the disciples receive a growing revelation that Jesus is not just a profound teacher, but something significantly more.

When the disciples recognise it is Jesus in their presence, another fascinating shift takes place: Peter asks for permission to get out of the boat and walk on the water to Jesus. Peter was impetuous, sure, but this is pretty far out there. What absurd confidence! Where does it come from?

Jesus told his quaking followers to "take courage". So, Peter takes him at his word and gets out of the boat. Yes, he takes his eyes off Jesus and realises that, according to his own abilities, he really cannot walk on water. But he still gets out of the boat and Jesus still grabs his hand to save him from drowning. Jesus is teaching his followers what it means to have faith. It is not theoretical; it requires getting out of the boat. But they are not to do it in their own confidence, with their own courage. They need confidence in Jesus to follow him, meekly, into the miraculous. And they will need this meekness later when Jesus commissions them as his witnesses into the world.

Where does your confidence for daily life come from? You may feel like you don't really have any, or that you have been faking confidence for some time. As with the disciples, the confidence to be meek does not just come from ourselves. It comes from being in the presence of Jesus, knowing that he knows us, trusting that if we walk towards him, even if it is on the water, he will not let us down.

ACTION

What is the situation in your life that you really don't want to face? Can you take a step towards it today? Can you trust that God is with you as you do? Examine your fears and feelings about it and surrender them to God as best you can. Ask God to show you the situation in a new light according to his presence with you. And take a step – just one step – towards facing that situation today. Share this step with your Infinitum hub for accountability and prayer.

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "the power and the glory." Is Jesus powerful in your life? Do you trust in his power?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 93**

Consider again this prayer:

"I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."

Step 5 from AA says tells us to "admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrong."

Now this is stepping out of the boat! This is a scary moment for anyone, but it is very important to note that the step tells us to admit our wrongs to God first. He is the first one to receive our confession, and we know that he is trustworthy and able to forgive.

So, take the searching and fearless moral inventory you made last week and bring it to God; admit it to yourself, and pray about sharing it with one other trustworthy person.

Find a place to be still and silent for seven minutes and try standing during this time if you can. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you how you can be confident in the presence of God.

Remember a line from the prayer as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for seven minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the seven minutes are up, pray **Psalms 93** again.

EVENING

Read **Deuteronomy 31:6-8**

LAMENT

Where has doubt paralysed you, or fear kept you from stepping out of the boat? Lament this and ask for God's help to step into the courage and confidence he has for you.

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Step 1: Become aware of God's presence

Step 2: Review the day with gratitude

Step 3: Pay attention to your emotions

Step 4: Choose one thing to pray for

Step 5: Look to tomorrow

KEEPING SILENCE

MORNING

REFLECTION

Read **Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 26:57-63; Matthew 27:11-14**

Our body likes to breathe. We've been doing it ever since we emerged from the womb and let loose our first cry into the world. But there are times when, even though our body is screaming at us to open wide our mouths and suck in oxygen, we must overcome the urge and keep our mouths closed. When we are underwater, for instance.

No one likes the idea of keeping their mouth shut in the face of accusation. But part of self-control and meekness is learning when to speak, and when to hold our tongue and keep silence. This is not about looking the other way and letting injustice go by unmarked. This is about recognising the difference between speaking with purpose and speaking idle words. Sometimes we speak to wound others. Sometimes we speak to make ourselves look good. Sometimes we speak in order to feel good, to lash out, or to feel like we are accomplishing something. Often, our words do not help but instead do harm. Often, our words are careless and cutting, especially when we feel threatened. Matthew 12:36 tells us that "everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken."

If we are to join Jesus in his meekness, we should look carefully to his silence in front of Caiaphas and Pilate. Even in the face of unfair, untrue accusation, when the right words could presumably have made a

difference, Jesus chooses not to speak in his defence. What is the secret of Jesus' meekness, his self-control? He knows who he is, and Whose he is. He is secure in his identity as his Father's Son, and in his mission to bring glory to the Father and salvation to the world. He does not receive his identity from his accusers, unless they accidentally happen to speak the truth, even in mockery.

The ability to meekly keep our silence, then, is directly related to where we receive our identity. If it is in Christ, then we will not need to speak in order to prove or defend ourselves. Accusation may hurt, but it cannot change who we are if our identity as "Beloved" is secure.

ACTION

Practice silence again today as much as it is possible. Don't answer accusations, stay off social media, keep your surrounding distractions at a minimum. Try to remember and live out Proverbs 10:19 today – "When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is prudent." (CSB)

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "yours is the kingdom." How would your day change if you really believed the kingdom belonged to God, and not to you?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 46**

How could this Psalm direct you to a place of godly stillness and silence? How does it encourage self-control even when facing accusation, hardship and struggle?

Consider again this Wesleyan prayer:

"I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."

Find a place to be still and silent for seven minutes and try standing during this time if you can. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you where you are tempted to act and speak where you should be still and silent.

Remember a line from this prayer as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for seven minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the seven minutes are up, pray **Psalm 46** again.

Read **James 1:19-27; 3:1-11**

LAMENT

When you have you spoken carelessly or angrily and caused harm to yourself or others? Confess and lament this, knowing God knowing will forgive. When have you been harmed by the careless or angry words of others? Admit and lament this too, knowing God can heal.

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Step 1: Become aware of God's presence

Step 2: Review the day with gratitude

Step 3: Pay attention to your emotions

Step 4: Choose one thing to pray for

Step 5: Look to tomorrow

REFUSING TO KEEP SILENCE

REFLECTION

Read **Exodus 3:1-20; Acts 4:1-22**

I went snorkelling with my son once in Hawaii. He had taken swimming lessons, but the ocean is a little different than the local community pool. We got out to about his waist level and he was really afraid. So, I said, "Why don't we hold hands as we swim? We'll go together." It took a little convincing, but he finally took my hand and we started slowly swimming around in the current. It wasn't long before we spotted a huge sea turtle, which we followed at a respectful distance. We swam together for about thirty minutes, in both shallow and deep water, stunned by the kaleidoscope of colours to be found just under the water's surface. We were too busy enjoying the splendour of the ocean together to think about the mechanics of swimming. As long as I was there beside him, my son was free to experience this beauty without fear.

In the Exodus story above, Moses is frightened to speak, and for good reason. He assumes, with just cause, that neither the Israelites nor the Pharaoh were going to listen to him, and he was worried about the consequences. God's response to Moses, (who really tries to get out of the job), is found in verse 12: "I will be with you." Moses eventually agrees to go and speak, not on his own initiative or strength,

but because God revealed himself, first in the burning bush, then by speaking to him directly. Being in the presence of Yahweh changes everything for Moses.

The disciples likewise would not have spoken boldly before the Sanhedrin on their own initiative. We know this because when Jesus was arrested in the Garden they all slunk away. And when Peter was accused during Jesus' trial he denied even knowing him. Yet now they stand before the religious authorities and refuse to be silent. They would rather suffer punishment or death than to remain silent about what they have seen. They witnessed the resurrected Jesus, and were filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit, and this changed everything.

Witnessing the beauty of God, and knowing the presence of God, helps us to stand and speak without being paralysed by fear.

ACTION

How can you exercise gentle resistance alongside those who are suffering in your neighbourhood? Speak with your Infinitum Hub about this and speak to people in your neighbourhood as well. Where are the felt needs? Where do people need encouragement to stand firm and to speak out?

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the phrase "your will be done" as you go about your day. What is the Lord's will for you to do today?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 37:1-24**

Consider again this Wesleyan prayer:

"I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,

Praised for you or criticized for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.

And now, O wonderful and holy God,

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,

you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."

How do you know when to be silent, and when to speak? How have you made this decision in your life up until now? How can prayer help you in this discernment?

Find a place to be still and silent for seven minutes and try standing during this time If you can. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you where you are tempted to keep quiet and passive when you should be speaking and acting boldly.

Remember a line from this prayer as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for seven minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the seven minutes are up, pray **Psalm 37:25-40**

Read **Ephesians 6:18-20**

LAMENT

When have you been too afraid or unconcerned to speak up in the past when God wanted you to speak? Or when have you been hurt by someone else's refusal or inability to speak up for you? How does our silence contribute to injustice in our world? Lament this to the Lord, asking for mercy and boldness to speak as and when you ought.

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Step 1: Become aware of God's presence

Step 2: Review the day with gratitude

Step 3: Pay attention to your emotions

Step 4: Choose one thing to pray for

Step 5: Look to tomorrow

INHERITING THE EARTH

REFLECTION

Read **Phil 4:1-13**

Horatio Spafford wrote the hymn: "It is Well". He had lost all his money in the Chicago Fire of 1871, after having lost his son the year before. Here is what happened next, in the words of Kenneth Osbeck:

"Desiring a rest for his wife and four daughters...Spafford planned a European trip for his family in 1873. In November of that year, due to unexpected last-minute business developments, he had to remain in Chicago, but sent his wife and four daughters on ahead as scheduled on the S.S. Ville du Havre. He expected to follow in a few days. On November 22 the ship was struck by the Lochearn, an English vessel, and sank in twelve minutes. Several days later the survivors were finally landed at Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, 'Saved alone.' Spafford left immediately to join his wife. This hymn is said to have been penned as he approached the area of the ocean thought to be where the ship carrying his daughters had sunk."

How could he write this hymn? How could it possibly be well in his soul? "When peace like a river attendeth my way / when sorrows like sea billows roll / whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say / It is well, it is well with my soul."

Paul writes something similar, and it is all about the contentedness that comes from meekness. Paul's list of hardships from 2 Corinthians 11:16-33 is frankly impressive. Jail time, floggings, whippings, pelted with stones, lost at sea, deprived, constantly in danger and constantly on the move. But in Philippians 4 he explains that he has learned the secret of contentment: he is grateful, he prays, he thinks about that which is beautiful and noble, and he leans entirely on the strength of God. Incredibly, in the midst of the most tumultuous life imaginable, Paul knows peace. His peace does not depend on exterior circumstances, but upon the rock of Christ on which he stands.

It is this peace and contentment that might be the best definition of meekness we can find. Many jokes have been made about how the meek aren't likely to inherit the earth any time soon. But navigating life's sorrows with such peace as Paul and Horatio Spafford possessed must be part of what Jesus means in this blessing. "In this world," Jesus says, "you will know sorrow. But take heart, for I have overcome the world!" (John 16:33) Our inheritance, which we get the first taste of here and now, is the world that Jesus has overcome in his death and resurrection.

"Though Satan should buffet/Though trials should come/Let this blessed assurance control/That Christ has regarded my helpless estate/And has shed his own blood for my soul!"

ACTION

Listen to "It is Well" by Audrey Assad:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY5o9mP22V0>

PRAYER

Pray The Lord's Prayer, considering each phrase as you pray it. Does anything jump out to you today from the prayer? Think especially of the

phrase "give us this day our daily bread." Do you trust God to give you today the peace and strength that you need?

MID-DAY

Pray **Psalm 61**

Consider again this Wesleyan prayer:

"I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
Praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.
And now, O wonderful and holy God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."

Find a place to be still and silent for seven minutes and try standing during this time if you can. Ask the Spirit to meet you in your stillness and to show you what contentment could look like for you.

Remember a line from this prayer as a help to recall your mind if it starts to wander.

Set a timer for seven minutes, breathe deeply, and begin.

When the seven minutes are up, pray **Psalm 61** again.

EVENING

Read **2 Cor 10:1-6**

LAMENT

Have you defined your inheritance by your exterior circumstances?
Or have you been able to know the peace and contentment from God
even through the storms of life? Lament the things that have caused
you to suffer, but try to give them fully to God, and ask him for his
peace and strength.

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Step 1: Become aware of God's presence

Step 2: Review the day with gratitude

Step 3: Pay attention to your emotions

Step 4: Choose one thing to pray for

Step 5: Look to tomorrow

WEEK FOUR

COMING UP FOR AIR

(REFLECTING ON SURRENDER)

Meet with your Infinitum Hub and talk through how your last three weeks has gone. Share with one about what questions, actions, or topics were challenging, and why? Did you encounter anything new about yourself? Did you encounter God in any new or unexpected ways? Share some of your answers to the questions from the week and pray for one another.

Talk about the Five AA steps that have been recommended to you so far. How have you engaged with them? Do you find it difficult using a resource designed for those in addictions? Can you see any parallels in your life? Share your inventory lists with one another if you have not already done so.

LAMENT

Were there any significant moments of lament for you in this past week? Are you learning to address your pain, fear and sin through godly sorrow? Remind yourselves how to practice lament daily.

AWARENESS EXAMEN

Talk through how your daily times of Awareness Examen went and remind yourselves how to keep practicing this as you go forward.

MEDIA

VIDEO

On Rest

PODCAST

During this Reflection week we suggest you keep practicing daily Stillness, Lament and Awareness Examen. Go back through your notes to ponder some of the questions that you found challenging over the last three weeks. What have you learned especially about surrender, and how to apply it in your life?

Here is a beautiful prayer from Richard Foster that you can end your meeting with, and that you can use each day this week:

A PRAYER OF RELINQUISHMENT

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.
May your will be my delight today.
May your way have perfect sway in me.
May your love be the pattern of my living.

I surrender to you
my hopes,
my dreams,
my ambitions.

Do with them what you will,
when you will, as you will.

I place into your loving care
my family,
my friends,
my future.

Care for them with a care that I can never give.

I release into your hands
my need to control,
my craving for status,
my fear of obscurity.

Eradicate the evil, purify the good,
and establish your

kingdom on earth.
For Jesus' sake,
Amen.

