Preparing the Soil

Daily - for week beginning on November 23rd

Just like any relationship, regular communication with God is needed. Therefore, I challenge you to create a daily routine to prepare your hearts for God's word. *Preparing the Soil* is something that can be done in less than 20 minutes per day. It just requires a time and place of quiet (before the day begins or after the day has ended or even on the train coming home from work). The readings are designed to coordinate with the sermon theme of the following week. I invite you to follow each step Monday through Saturday.

I. Invocation (Pray this each day):
Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

II. Psalm 85 (Read this each day)

III. Daily Scripture Readings

Monday	Isaiah 40:1-5
Tuesday	Isaiah 40:6-11
Wednesday	Luke 1:5-25
Thursday	Luke 1:57-66
Friday	Luke 1:67-80
Saturday	Mark 1:1-8

IV. Prayers

Monday	For those in need of healing from *Yellow Pages*
Tuesday	For those serving in military and vets
Wednesday	For our shut-ins and caregivers and families in grief
Thursday	For our leaders in government and church
Friday	For family members and neighbors
Saturday	For yourself

V. Reflection Silent and/or written

VI: Benediction (Spoken each day):
The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen. (Numbers 6:24-26)

The general idea and often the words of the benediction are taken from: *A Guide to Prayer* by Rueben Job and Norman Shawchuck, (The Upper Room: Nashville, 1983).

A Deeper Dive – *Lectio Divina*

Once a week

Lectio divina is a Latin phrase meaning "divine reading". It is an ancient way of taking a deep dive into a particular passage of the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." If the words of the Bible are inspired by God, then God must be trying to communicate with us through it. *Lectio divina* is a way to engage with the Bible not just with our brain but our heart and spirit as well. It is a way to "pray" the words of scripture.

The method is not difficult, but it will require that you set aside some quiet time in your week (usually 20 to 30 minutes). In addition to the "Preparing the Soil" work that you are doing each day, I invite you to set aside enough time to practice this *lectio divina* method once or twice this week. All you need is your Bible and a quiet space. If you are a person who journals, have your journal ready as well. See our website for a "How to" video on *lectio divina*. Here are the steps:

1. If you can, sit in a comfortable, upright position, relaxing your body as you feel the ground beneath you. Begin to take some deep, slow breaths to quiet your mind. The first goal is to come to stillness.
2. Pray for the Spirit of Jesus to come and meet you.
3. ***Read*** Isaiah 40:6-11* slowly (in Latin, this is called *lectio*). Pay close attention to what stands out to you (a word, phrase, or image) and what you sense the Holy Spirit is highlighting in your mind and heart.
4. ***Meditate*** on this Bible passage (this is called *meditatio*). "Chew" on it. Re-read the passage a few more times and reflect on those words and ideas. Some find it helpful to read it from different Bible translations.
5. ***Pray*** on this Bible passage (this is called *oratio*). Turn what you are hearing into a prayer back to God.
6. ***Contemplate*** this Bible passage (this is called *contemplatio*). Spend a few minutes sitting in God's presence to reflect on and enjoy God's love and attention. Reflect on what God might be telling you to do in this Bible reading.

*If you choose to practice *lectio divina* a second time this week, I suggest using Luke 1:68-79.

Above method of *Lectio Divina* is taken from *Practicing the Way Workbook* by John Mark Comer, et al. (WaterBrook Press: Colorado Springs, 2025)