

November 2021

Introduction to Ezekiel

The goal, as usual, is to encounter the Lord as we read Scripture. It is also to let it change us, train us, and correct us. We will examine some of the key images in Ezekiel and see how they find their fulfillment in the life of Jesus. Since this is our story too, we will try to imagine where we ourselves fit, and what kind of impact these Scriptures will have on our own marriage and family. With all that in mind, we have chosen a few passages to read and pray with as married couples. But first, a brief background.

King Josiah was king of Judah until 602 BC. When he died, his son Jehoiakim succeeded him as king, and in 601 BC, Jehoiakim rebelled against the king of Babylon. Fortunately for Jehoiakim, he died before the Babylonians could punish him. His son Jehoiachin occupied the throne for barely a few months, when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem. They deported him to Babylon, along with his royal family and many upper-class citizens, and put a puppet king named Zedekiah on the throne. Among those deported to Babylon was the priest Ezekiel. It was there, in Babylon, that God called him as a prophet. About five years later God gave him one of the most important visions in all the Old Testament: he saw God abandoning the temple and returning to heaven on a heavenly chariot.

In a series of dramatic prophetic actions and performances, Ezekiel foretold the inevitable destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews were going to be punished because they had broken the covenant. Their offenses included oppression of the poor, idolatry, and child sacrifice. He compared their wickedness to that of Sodom (16:46–56). He was convinced that the Lord would punish and then restore his people for the sake of his holy name (chapter 36). Their rescue would demonstrate once and for all that their God was the Lord of all.

Several of Ezekiel's most powerful images are to be found in chapters 33–48, the hopeful section of the book chapters. They echo many of the themes we have seen already, themes that will be fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus.

The Good Shepherd (34). In place of the wicked leaders of Judah, shepherds who fed on the sheep and abused them, God himself will be the good shepherd who seeks the lost sheep. When Jesus later takes this title for himself, he will be claiming to be Israel's God.

Dry Bones (37). The return of the exiles to the land will be compared to seeing a valley filled with dry bones that come back to life when the Spirit of God blows on them. This vision will provide the language and metaphors that will ultimately lead to the belief in the resurrection from the dead.

Restored Temple (40-47). Finally, Ezekiel's vision of the restored Temple, with the water of life flowing out from it, will be the basis of many of the most important New Testament teachings about Jesus, the fulfillment of the day of the Lord, and the fullness of the new creation. Jesus will be the new Temple and the source of living water that will last for all eternity.



Ezekiel 1:2–6, 22, 26–28

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 1:2–6, 22, 26–28

On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), ³ the word of the LORD came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was on him there. ⁴ As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. ⁵ In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form. ⁶ Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. . . . ²² Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads. . . . ²⁶ And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form. ²⁷ Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendor all around. ²⁸ Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

Meditation

Ezekiel caught a glimpse of the glory of the Lord. The whole vision is worth reading and meditating on. It is full of symbols and images that we often find difficult to understand, but that would have been readily recognizable to the Jews in exile in Babylon. Ezekiel has borrowed and then adapted for his own use images that were used in the ancient world to describe the indescribable divine realm. Human language is limited, and this vision is shrouded in mysterious, mystic language (e.g., winged creatures with multiple faces and wheels with eyes). Its presentation of the glory of God was to become important in later years to Jewish mystics, who used it as a staple component of their meditation. Some scholars have suggested that while on his way to Damascus, St. Paul was meditating on this very vision, and that when he came to the part where Ezekiel describes the one of human likeness sitting on the throne, Paul saw the face of Jesus.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 3:10–15

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 3:10–15

He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears; ¹¹ then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD"; whether they hear or refuse to hear. Then the spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the LORD rose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of loud rumbling; ¹³ it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, that sounded like a loud rumbling. ¹⁴ The spirit lifted me up and bore me away; I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. ¹⁵ I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the river Chebar. And I sat there among them, stunned, for seven days.

Meditation

The author of 1 Kings described in this way the moment when the presence of the Lord filled the Temple that Solomon had built: "And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:10-11). But this passage describes a vision Ezekiel had of the glory of the Lord abandoning the Temple (see also 11:22). The prophet was stunned and saddened by the vision. God had left his home. Shortly after Ezekiel's vision the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. When they returned to the land more than 50 years later, they rebuilt the Temple—but Scripture recounts no story of the glory of the Lord filling the Temple once again. That longing for their God to return was to be stunningly realized, however—when God, in the person of Jesus, returned, not to merely fill the Temple building but to himself be the living Temple. Then Jesus would pour out his Spirit on us. We, the body of Christ, his Bride, have now become the Temple, the place where God himself is pleased to dwell on earth.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Ezekiel 16:2–13

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 16:2–13

Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. ⁴ As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths. ⁵ No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born. ⁶ I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, "Live! ⁷ and grow up like a plant of the field." You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare. ⁸ I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. ⁹ Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil. ¹⁰ I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric. ¹¹ I adorned you with ornaments: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain on your neck, ¹² a ring on your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. ¹³ You were adorned with gold and silver, while your clothing was of fine linen, rich fabric, and embroidered cloth. You had choice flour and honey and oil for food. You grew exceedingly beautiful, fit to be a queen.

Meditation

This is a story about the power of love. It is about God's tender care for his bride. He chose her, cleaned her up, clothed her with fine linen and jewels, entered into a covenant with her. She was beautiful, fit to be a queen. She was his. In our marriages we have received the power of love; it transforms ordinary men and women into handsome grooms and beautiful brides. We catch a glimpse of the beauty and splendor of our beloved. God is transforming us and filled us with inexpressible glory by adopting us and making us his very own children.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation.*

Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 16:58–60, 62–63

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 16:58–60, 62–63

You must bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, says the LORD. ⁵⁹ Yes, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant; ⁶⁰ yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. . . ⁶² I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, ⁶³ in order that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.

Meditation

Positioned between this passage and the last one upon which we reflected is a graphic and disturbing description of Israel's rejection of the covenant and her philandering idolatry. Breaking covenant has consequences. Abandoning God is as viscerally painful as abandoning a spouse who has done nothing but good for you. But punishment of sin is never the last word. God will remember his promises. He will take positive action. He will make a new covenant. It will be like the days when love was young, but this time, will be enriched by the experience of God's great mercy and his forgiveness. That describes our spousal love too, as we grow and mature. We build a life together and are bound together by acts of mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 34:11–16

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 34:11–16

For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹² As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴ I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Meditation

Ezekiel prophesied that God himself would seek the lost sheep. Jesus' claim to be the Good Shepherd is a claim to be Israel's God. God protects, nourishes, and heals each one. God loves us each personally. He seeks each of us out and loves us each uniquely. He loves us not because he has to, not because after all, he is God, and must love us. He does not love us because of what we can do for him. No, he just loves us. He is captivated by us, moved by our unique beauty and splendor, which is a reflection of his own infinite beauty, glory, and splendor.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 34:17–24

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 34:17–24

As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: ¹⁸ Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? ¹⁹ And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet? ²⁰ Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²² I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³ I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

Meditation

Sometimes it is possible to grow complacent with God, to become too familiar with him, or our own image of him. At those times, we really ought to read this passage and its New Testament parallel in Matthew 25, as individuals and as couples. There will be a reckoning. There will be judgment. In this passage, God reiterates that he has no time for those who oppress the poor and needy. He has no time for those who shove the weak aside to make a profit and claim that it is not personal, it is just business. God himself will judge. God himself will make all things right and just. Before we take the final exam, it might be helpful to ask how well we, as a couple, cooperate with God and his work. How well do we make a place in our hearts and time and money for the poor whom God loves so much?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

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Pray

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-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 34:25–31

I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. ²⁶ I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. ²⁷ The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them. ²⁸ They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. ²⁹ I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations. ³⁰ They shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord GOD. ³¹ You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord GOD.

Meditation

What does the "covenant of peace" look like practically in our marriages and families? Because we are all imperfect, peace looks like quickly asking for forgiveness when we have offended one another. It looks like granting forgiveness and not hanging on to hurts. It looks like always thinking the best of each other. It is the accumulation of small, tender gestures that repair, restore, and protect unity. In this covenant of peace, the Lord breaks the bonds of the enemies of our unity. The covenant of peace is lived out with the Lord in our ordinary life. Pope Francis puts it this way: "The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. Living in a family makes it hard for us to feign or lie; we cannot hide behind a mask. If that authenticity is inspired by love, then the Lord reigns there, with his joy and his peace. Mutual concern 'brings together the human and the divine,' for it is filled with the love of God. In the end, marital spirituality is a spirituality of the bond in which divine love dwells" (*Amoris Laetitia*, p. 314).

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 36:22–25

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 36:22–25

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴ I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

Meditation

It must have been a bit humbling to hear this oracle. Israel had sinned gravely. They had forsaken the covenant. They had pursued other gods. The result of this was that they were conquered and exiled, and the home of their “national god” had been destroyed. In a world whose key social principle was honor and shame, their “protector god” looked impotent. He had been shamed in front of all the other gods. But the truth is that these weren’t actually gods! In order to demonstrate to the whole world and all the followers of false gods that he was the Lord of all, he was planning to rescue his people from their dire situation and restore them to their land. This is a lesson in the nature of “holiness.” God is wholly Other; he is supreme. He is the Creator and there are no other gods. The mystery of it all is that he has chosen to make himself known to the world through us, and through his fidelity to his promises to us. When we pray “Hallowed be thy name,” we should be aware that God’s reputation is at stake in what we do and who we are. Our behavior determines whether others see him as holy. We give God a good or bad name.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 36:26–30

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 36:26–30

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. ²⁸ Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant, so that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Meditation

Here is a most remarkable promise: God will give us a new heart. He will put a new spirit within us. We know that on Pentecost he did just that. He poured out his Holy Spirit on those who would but believe in Jesus and ask for it. What is even more wonderful is that at every turn in the Christian life, he will continue to fill us, fill our marriages, fill our families with that Spirit. For our part, we simply need to ask with expectant faith, and leave the Spirit free to do what only the Spirit can do. He will manifest himself to each of us in whatever way he decides, but always with the result of bringing us closer to Jesus and the Father. It is important to regularly tell stories about where we see the Holy Spirit at work, so that we can be more attuned to what the Spirit is doing and what the Spirit wants to tell us.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

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Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 37:1–10

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." ⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Meditation

This passage contains so many images, echoes, and themes that recur throughout the Bible. Hear the echoes of the Spirit of God hovering over the chaotic waters at Creation. Envision the Spirit hovering over Mary at the Incarnation. Hear the mighty wind blow over the apostles on the day of Pentecost. All are worth meditating on. But think, too, of the personal times when we have needed the Holy Spirit to come upon us. When our marriages have felt like a valley of dry bones, dull, joyless, or full of tension. When we have felt like we were in our own exile. What is the solution? Well, our problems may not be simple, but the way back is clear, through the Holy Spirit who was given to us in a special way at our wedding. If you are in a dry time, reread this passage and imagine you and your spouse as Ezekiel. The Lord says to you, "Can these bones live?" Then the Lord tells you to prophesy to these bones, to this marriage. Say to the breath of God that is the Holy Spirit: "Come upon these bones. Come upon us, Holy Spirit. Bring us new life in you." He will hear and answer your prayer.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 37:11–14

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 37:11–14

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' ¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

Meditation

God's gift of restoring the exiles to their land was so huge that it could only be described by the almost unimaginable metaphor of opening graves and restoring dead bodies to life. Belief in the resurrection was still hundreds of years in the future for the Jews. And even by the time of Jesus, over 500 years later, the belief in resurrection was not universal in Judaism. But Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones coming to life and the exiles returning from the grave provided the language and imagery to articulate the full revelation of life after death. By the time of the Maccabean revolt many Jews had come to understand that resurrection was much more than coming out of the grave. Resurrection meant a new life filled with and animated by the Spirit of God. It was the long-awaited return to the Garden from whence we had been exiled. Our marriages in Christ, filled and animated by the Holy Spirit, serve as a living metaphor for, and a sign pointing to, the union with God that will be our life in the resurrection as the bride of Christ himself.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

Unity Prayer: *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



Ezekiel 47:1–2, 6–12

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 47:1–2, 6–12

Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. ² Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and the water was coming out on the south side. ⁶ He said to me, "Mortal, have you seen this?" Then he led me back along the bank of the river. ⁷ As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸ He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. ⁹ Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. ¹⁰ People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-ge-di to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. ¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. ¹² On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.

Meditation

Trees planted along the river of life that flows from the Temple will produce leaves that are for healing. For us, those healing leaves are simple acts of love, heartfelt gestures of gratitude, kind words, and the humorous ways we diffuse an argument. They are all the little ways in which we protect our unity. When we are the trees planted near the river of life that flows from the throne of Christ (Revelation 22:1-2) our simple acts of love bring healing to our spouse, our children, our neighbors, our church our world.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.