



# Prayer Journal

WRITTEN BY

*Reverend Canon  
Chris Russell*





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# Introduction

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Our hope is simple – that this small Prayer Journal enables you to connect with God in each of the days between Ascension and Pentecost. And most particularly we hope that it helps you meaningfully take on your lips that most ancient prayer of the church of Jesus Christ: ‘Come Holy Spirit.’

This prayer is transformative – for the world, for the church, for our communities, for our households and for ourselves. It is prayer that makes the difference. And goodness how the world needs the difference only God can bring.

For each of the next 11 days we will reflect on what it means to pray ‘Come Holy Spirit’ in the company of some momentous characters of Scripture. We do this believing that who we encounter God to be in these stories, is who God is for us in these days.

For overarching it all is the conviction that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given not for our sake, but for God’s sake. And particularly for the work of God in the world. And in the world the Spirit doesn’t just do general things, but specific things, for particular people.

That modern day saint and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, ‘The most direct way to others is always through prayer.’

The prayer ‘Come Holy Spirit’ isn’t essentially for ourselves, but for those whom God wants to reach. The drive of *Thy Kingdom Come*, this year and every year, is the lives of others.

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Once again we invite you to consider who the particular people are that you should make the focus of your prayers in these next days. Those Five individuals, maybe members of family, friends, colleagues, or neighbours who presently live life oblivious to God's love. Those who need to hear and receive the relentless love of God in Christ. Those who need to experience the difference only God can bring.

So, for their sake let us learn again what it means to pray, 'Come Holy Spirit.'

**Below is space to write the names of five people that you will be praying for throughout *Thy Kingdom Come*:**

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# Ascension Day

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## The Spirit of Promise

### THE SCRIPTURE

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*<sup>4</sup> On one occasion, while he was eating with them, Jesus gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>8</sup>...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'*

*<sup>9</sup>After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. [Acts 1:4, 8-9]*

### THE GIFT

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There is nothing escapist about prayer. To pray is to engage fully with the way things are.

But when we consider the state of the world we can easily despair. Watching the news seems to be getting harder. But the difficulty isn't just out there. In our own communities, in our churches, and households we experience it.

We can find ourselves supposing, 'If only Jesus was here with us – doing what He did.'

Yet the night before Jesus said it was 'good' that He was going from them. How on earth could that be the case?

Because only in His ascending can the gift of the Holy Spirit be sent.

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## THE PROMISE

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The hope, the expectation in praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit can be, must be, certain.

In fact every prayer we pray is only possible because of a promise. And this prayer for the Spirit is not just uttered to one who promises to hear us, but to one who has promised to give us what we are requesting. 'How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.'  
*[Luke 11:13]*

## THE DIFFERENCE

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To be a follower of Jesus is to be a witness. We don't get to choose if we want to be. We all are. We have witnessed his love for us first-hand and witness to that love with all of our lives. No one is up to this on their own. But the Spirit is given. Not just to give us a bit more pep in being witnesses, but to actually make us witnesses.

## THE PRAYER

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The prayer, 'Come Holy Spirit' is prayed by those who need God to fulfil His promise once again, so we might be His witnesses. Pray that the Spirit will make you effective as a witness to your five loved ones.

*'Oh Lord never suffer us to think that we can stand by ourselves and not need You.'* *[John Donne]*

# The Spirit Brooding over Creation

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.  
<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. <sup>3</sup>And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.  
[Genesis 1:1-3]*

## THE GIFT

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I wonder if you have ever had those moments where the question flashed across your wondering, 'Why is there not nothing?' 'Why does anything exist?'

As essential as we humans like to consider ourselves, we did nothing to bring ourselves into existence. Life, all life, is entirely the gift of God.

## THE PROMISE

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The Spirit of God 'broods' – the actual word suggests a mother bird nurturing the eggs in her nest – an incubation of life. And this isn't happening in favourable conditions or ideal settings – but when things are dark, chaotic, formless and empty.

The Spirit is the Spirit of who brings Life where it isn't.

## THE DIFFERENCE

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The Holy Spirit is the difference. Bringing the energy and pulse of life and the light. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the word effective.

When you pray 'Come Holy Spirit' over the lives of your five friends you are invoking the presence of the one who brought the world into being out of nothing. It's that big.

#### THE PRAYER

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*'Eternal God, eternal Trinity, You are a mystery as deep as the sea; the more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I search for You.*

*But I can never be satisfied; what I receive will ever leave me desiring more.*

*When You fill my soul, I have an ever-greater hunger, and I grow more famished for Your light.*

*I desire above all to see You, the true light, as You really are. Amen.'*

*[St Catherine of Siena 1347-80]*

# The Spirit of Grace

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.<sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me. [Ruth 1:16-17]*

## THE GIFT

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Naomi was suffering the most catastrophic disaster – she was a refugee from her home town of Bethlehem, and in the foreign land she fled to her husband died, leaving her with two sons. Then her sons died. She had lost everything. She expected to lose her daughters-in-law. But Ruth wasn't having any of it. She was committed – and her promise of faithfulness, loyalty and love is one of the most beautiful gifts of grace in scripture.

This is something only God can enable, and He enables it by His Holy Spirit. The Spirit who connects us to God connects us in kindness to each other, giving us grace in our relationships.

## THE PROMISE

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In this story Ruth is the one who makes the promise. It's not an easy promise: she has no guarantees it will work out. But her commitment to her devastated mother-in-law is a human example of God's commitment to us. And she makes it with no awareness of the fruit that will come from it.



# The Spirit of Listening

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*<sup>10</sup> The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!'*

*Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for Your servant is listening.'*

*<sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to Samuel... [1 Samuel 3:10-11a]*

## THE GIFT

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We have something to give because of what has been given to us. We have something to say because of what has been said to us.

God is a God who speaks; His word creates, sustains and redeems us.

Samuel's mother Hannah knew this and lived by it, and yet her son Samuel needed to learn to hear the Lord's voice for himself.

The gift is primarily hearing God call us by name – could there be anything more beautiful we could want for those we love? Yet we notice how Samuel is enabled to hear God by others.

## THE PROMISE

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Samuel is a boy living with and being raised by the priest Eli at the shrine in Shiloh. We are told that, 'in those days the word of the Lord was rare.' (1 Samuel 3:1) Yet God speaks to young Samuel. Twice he thinks it is Eli.

Eli doesn't work it out immediately, but what he does is to encourage Samuel to be open, and to listen. And, vitally, Eli



# The Spirit of Confidence

## THE SCRIPTURE

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<sup>12</sup> *When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."*

<sup>13</sup> *"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?"*

*The Lord turned to him and said... [Judges 6:12-13a]*

## THE GIFT

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Because we love a hero in our films, books and box sets, we sometimes characterise biblical figures as heroes when actually they were just people like us. The real lesson isn't, 'You too can be a hero!' The lesson is, 'Look! God can use normal people like you and me!'

The story of Gideon isn't just a Sunday school teacher's dream. Amidst all the drama, here is someone who isn't an obvious candidate to do an extraordinary thing, and that sounds suspiciously like us.

## THE PROMISE

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The promise is for Gideon, who is by his own reckoning from, 'the weakest clan in Manasseh, and I am the least of my family.' It is simple – the Lord says, 'I will be with you.'

This is the promise made again and again. And again and again, by God to the people He calls. He guarantees, on the pledge of His word, His proximity, nearness, and closeness. And this is His promise to us in these days – by his Spirit.



# The Spirit of Silence

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*<sup>11</sup> The LORD said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

*Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'  
[1 Kings 19:11-13]*

## THE GIFT

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Elijah is a hero of the faith. Swashbuckling, uncompromising, fearless, larger than life.

This moment on the mountain comes after a high noon contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. It's a moment of high drama, ecstasy and victory. But we meet our hero on the mountain and God wants to draw close to him – not just to reassure him. But to interrupt him. To add something into the mix he was missing.

## THE PROMISE

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The promise is that Elijah is not alone. God is with him, proximate to him, close to him.

Yet I wonder if Elijah misses it.

God isn't in the wind, the fire or the earthquake. Not in the big ticket items. The way that Elijah had been used to God

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showing up. No God was in the gentle whisper, or 'the sound of sheer silence.' And do you know what – I think Elijah misses it. He pulls his cloak over his head – is that him putting his fingers in his ears – and his reply to God's question, 'What are you doing here Elijah?' is exactly the same as he replied before God came close.

Even the great heroes of the faith can miss it.

#### THE DIFFERENCE

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It's a view that isn't comfortable. But it seems that we can close our ears, eyes, hands, minds and sense to what God is trying to give to us. We can all miss the difference God's presence wants to bring to us. Pray that the Holy Spirit will work to draw your five loved ones in ways they can comprehend.

#### THE PRAYER

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*'When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy. When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song. When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with Thy peace and rest.*

*When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a king. When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O Thou Holy One, Thou Wakeful, come with Thy light and Thy thunder. Amen.'*

*[Rabindranath Tagore - 1861 -1941]*

# The Spirit of Leadership

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*Deborah sang this song...*

*'so may all Your enemies perish O Lord*

*But may all who love You be like the sun, when it rises in its strength.' [Judges 5:1a, 31]*

## THE PROMISE

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Deborah is a hero. Goodness knows what it took for a woman to be recognised as a leader back in the Judges' day. Here's one who isn't like most of us. But like all good leaders she inspires us not to do what she can, but to do what we can. Although, like her, something we can do is sing.

What she does, or rather what God does through her is to turn the tide on the enemies of God, which threatened the very survival of God's people. This happens not because of her skill with human weapons but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – another instance of God confronting destructive powers and controls.

## THE GIFT

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Godly leadership is a gift to the church. And a gift to individuals. Over the years it's likely that certain leaders at certain times have been exactly the gift you needed. Giving you hope, encouragement, challenge and direction. The song of Deborah encourages us to pray in gratitude for those who have led us well, and that we would be well led. And it encourages us to do this specifically by singing.

It might be such a common element of scripture that we

miss the gift of the song of deliverance – the gift of lifting up our voices not just to acknowledge what God has given, not just to express our gratitude for God's kindness, but praising openly the future which only God can make happen. And again and again, of course, it is the Spirit who gives the song.

#### THE DIFFERENCE

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Song turns history into worship. We're not just giving commentary on what has happened. We're involving ourselves in the revolution of God's redemption for the world. A redemption which is activated by the Holy Spirit.

Is there a song in your heart with which your soul resonates that you can sing for your five friends?

#### THE PRAYER

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*'My life flows on in endless song, above earth's lamentation.  
I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.  
Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing.  
It finds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing?'*

*[attributed to Pauline T]*

# The Spirit of Empowering

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*'The spirit of the Lord is on me because He has sent me to preach good news to the poor.' [Luke 4:18a]*

## THE PROMISE

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The promise is that Jesus is constant and unchanging in who He is.

There's no one who is more different from me than Jesus. I could list the ways He is singularly poles apart than me. That's one of the reasons I am drawn to love Him – not because of how similar He is, but for how distinct from me He is.

And yet, there are aspects of difference that I need to lean in on and make similar. And there are other differences that I need to stand in awe of and respect.

## THE GIFT

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The gift is in taking joy in the difference of who He is for us – Saviour, Lord, Redeemer, Shepherd, Teacher, Life – and taking delight in how He calls us to be like Him. He is one like us, human like us. And what He shares with us in being human is the need, yes the need, for the work of the Spirit to do what God is calling Him to do – to announce and establish the Kingdom of God.

## THE DIFFERENCE

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The Kingdom of God is the difference the world longs for. Where the poor receive what they don't have, the blind are given sight, the prisoners are set free, the lost are found, the lonely are given family, and the plight of the suffering is healed.



# The Spirit of Evangelism

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'*

*<sup>27</sup> So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means 'queen of the Ethiopians'). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,<sup>28</sup> and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.*

*<sup>29</sup> The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.' [Acts 8:26-29]*

## THE PROMISE

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The promise isn't for visits from angels, for ecstatic visions, for audible voices, or for the energy to be able to run alongside a moving chariot. It isn't that everyone we witness to will immediately come to faith.

But it is that God is always active. The first mover and primary evangelist. The one who Makes It Happen. And that, in the person of the Holy Spirit, He is active and working in the world at all times and in places, to draw all people to Himself.

## THE GIFT

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Philip follows the prompts. He responds to what God is unfolding before him. He is led to a particular place, to a particular person, at a particular time. In these days we pray the gift of the Holy Spirit to us will be the gift of sight, hearing, stirring and imagining to perceive where God is leading us. And especially with the five particular friends we are praying for.



# The Spirit Through Generations

## THE SCRIPTURE

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*<sup>3</sup> I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers... <sup>5</sup> I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. [2 Timothy 1:3,5]*

## THE PROMISE

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To be honest the promise through generations isn't always what we would most want. What would we not give for the assurance that our children and their children would love and serve the Lord? But we get no such assurances. And we know it isn't just easy.

This is because God can only promise for Himself. Not for another. And He continues to respect and uphold the dignity of human freedom to respond to His loving kindness. But what is promised is the immediacy of His presence on 'all people' – 'sons and daughters will prophesy... young men will see visions, old men will dream dreams... [Joel 2:28] God working in young and old, for the sake of other people.

## THE GIFT

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The gift of the Spirit is poured out on all – regardless of age, experience, standing, seniority or position. In fact, it seems that God pours out the gift of sincere faith on Timothy through his mother and grandmother. We can be the means by which the Spirit cascades through the generations. With each of us more ready to give than to receive.

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## THE DIFFERENCE

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Because the body of Christ has this dynamic which necessitates an expectancy to receive from every generation, across all backgrounds, it requires each of us to be open, alert and receptive to all, particularly those younger or older than us. The gifts of the Holy Spirit bind us together in dependence on one another. And in the pattern of giving and receiving we flow with the Spirit's free work.

There is no other community in the world who celebrates this intergenerational life.

## THE PRAYER

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Imagine how belonging to a community of all generations could remake your five friends. Pray that God might touch their lives through His multi-aged body.

***'We ask that You send the Holy Spirit as a holy offering to the holy church. As we assemble, give to all the saints the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the confirmation of true faith so that we may praise and glorify You through Your Son, Jesus Christ, through whom glory and honour to the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit in Your holy church are Yours now and forever! Amen.'***

***[Hippolytus of Rome, ca. 170–ca. 235]***

# Pentecost

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## The Spirit of Power

### SCRIPTURE

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*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. [Acts 2:1-4]*

### THE PROMISE

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The promise is kept. God is true to His word.

'Power from on high' comes among them, from outside of them, on each of them separately, but together.

### THE GIFT

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The gift is given freely by God, but in response to their prayers. Their prayer which recognised how much they needed God to fulfil His promise to them.

In His undertaking and assurance, He not only promised not to leave them but that He would come to them with what they needed- the power to be effective as His witnesses.

It is this same gift that we desire and crave this day. We know ourselves – how flimsy and faltering our witness is, how compromised and contaminated are the churches where we belong. We do not have hope in ourselves.

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Of ourselves we are weak and incapable. With the promised gift, we have divine energy and resources for what we have been charged to be and do in the world.

### THE DIFFERENCE

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It is impossible for us to fully exhaust the difference the Holy Spirit brings to those disciples – difference in how they are together, in their freedom and courage, in having the words to speak and in the impact these words have – in speaking and listening. And the result of all these differences is one thing – the proclaiming of Jesus Christ.

What difference do you long the Spirit would bring to you? Would bring to the church? Pray, pray, pray that this day our loving God will pour His Spirit out in super-abundance upon us all. That we might do one thing above else – be effective witnesses to Jesus the Saviour of the world.

### THE PRAYER

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For the sake of your five, pray for yourself, for the church, for your friends, 'Come Holy Spirit.'

***'Almighty God, Your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of Your kingdom: inspire us with Your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of Your love, that all who hear Your Word may be drawn to You, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'***



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