

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS:

A PRAYER GUIDE FOR SENIORS IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

By Tricia McCary Rhodes

Living as senior citizens these days is challenging, to say the least. We wake up every day to stark new realities, with changes upending our lives so fast we can hardly catch our breath. Whether shell-shocked by this global pandemic or disoriented by the mandate many of us face to shelter-in-place, we can feel abandoned or set aside, unsettled or confused. To be honest, it's easy to infer our usefulness has run its course, to withdraw in defeat or ambivalence.

But the grave uncertainty that now permeates our planet and has shattered the norms of daily existence is also an incredibly unique opportunity for seniors. What the world needs most now is courage and stability, wisdom and generosity, peace-filled perspectives that champion the faithfulness of God in every situation. We are the ones who have weathered decades of life's storms and can draw from the wellsprings of experience to bring hope to an angst-filled world. Our legacy of longevity is a gift that God is ready to share, if we will let Him. Truly, He is calling us for such a time as this!

USING THIS PRAYER GUIDE

This prayer guide offers fifteen different ways to pray as seniors navigate the greatest challenge the world has faced in over a century—the COVID-19 Pandemic. Each one includes a Scripture passage, some brief thoughts, a prayer and a practice. In addition, we encourage you to reflect on each day's readings, using the reflect guide below.

Reflect Guide: For each prayer theme, take some time to consider and/or discuss with another person or small group online:

- What kinds of feelings, perceptions or challenges does this bring up for you?
- What perspective might God be inviting you to consider through these thoughts & Scriptures?
- What have you learned from past life experiences about this that could encourage you or others?

Prayer Theme One:

ISOLATED, BUT NOT ALONE

Scriptures: Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” John 16:32-33

Thoughts: What seems to be shaping up to be the worst global pandemic in history is wreaking havoc in our hearts and homes. From disbelief to confusion, from anxiety to indignation, from frustration to fear—our emotions toss us about as we try to comprehend a life physically removed from friends, family and the activities that once filled our days.

Like an eerie fog, isolation creeps into our waking hours and troubled sleep. We have no idea how long this will last, or what price we might eventually have to pay, as the lifestyle we once took for granted seems to be unraveling moment by moment.

The simplest yet most profound reality we can affirm in prayer is that in a world where social distancing is the norm, and isolation a pandemic by-product, we are never truly alone. Though we may blithely concur with this biblical truth, what we really need is to discover anew the ways in which God stands ready to be our very present help. Jesus is calling you and me to take heart, to dig deep and find in him the peace we need and the power to overcome. This is our true mandate—for our own sakes and for those who may be looking to us for clues on how to persevere in this season of unprecedented uncertainty.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the *Reflect Guide* to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Write the phrases from the passage that mean the most to you as affirmations in prayer. For example, *Heavenly Father, as you were with your Son in his lonely isolation, you are here with me.* Pray for those you know who live alone, that they might experience this comfort.

Practice: Choose one of these phrases from the Scriptures above such as: “I am not alone, for the Father is with me.” “You may have peace.” “Take heart; I have overcome the world.” Write it on a phone reminder app or a sticky note and reflect on it three times throughout the day.

.....
Prayer Theme Two:

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Scriptures: For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Thoughts: Access to news 24/7 can seem like a lifeline during seasons of uncertainty. Stuck at home, we can easily become consumed with knowing the latest statistics, discovering the most recent development or pondering the onslaught of opinions that blare from our TVs, phones, tablets or computers. Yet social theorists suggest that this level of *information overload* may be doing more harm than good. In short, because our brains cannot handle these vast levels of input, we may experience increased anxiety, tension and an inability to make wise decisions. Emotionally vulnerable, we tear up at odd times or find ourselves struggling to breathe.

Paul would caution us here that living in this world does not mean waging war as it does. A steady diet of daily news can never produce the kind of discerning obedience that these times demand. Of course, we want to be informed and aware, but not to the detriment of our souls.

We need to pull away, to let it all go and shut out the noise often in order to connect with God who transcends news cycles and global pandemics and mandates to shelter-in-place. Nothing can take the place of the spiritual weapons he provides—things like prayer and reflection, Scripture reading and meditation—to empower us to tear down the strongholds that threaten our well-being in this season of uncertainty.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Find a way to get away from information overload today. Take a break from your phone, TV and tablet, go for a walk, spend some time in silent reflection. Repent of any ways you have immersed yourself in media and not cared for your soul. Then pray for the news personnel who are often risking their lives to help communicate needed information in this season.

Practice: Sociologists suggest that we clear our brains using a process called “brain dump.” If or when you feel your mind is on overload, take a two-minute time out. Jot down everything that comes to your mind, dumping it on paper. When the timer is up, crumple the paper and toss it, symbolizing your desire to simply trust in God.



Prayer Theme Three:

ROME BURNED...

Scriptures: Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. Philippians 2:1-4

Thoughts: During the first century, a horrific six-day fire destroyed over half of Rome. The rumor soon spread that emperor Nero was out of town playing as his city burned down. Since then, the slogan, “Rome burned while Nero played the fiddle” has been used to describe people who don’t take troublesome situations seriously enough.

As seniors, it has been hard to see ourselves in the ways we are being portrayed through this pandemic. *Weak, vulnerable, at-risk*—these are not soothing descriptions. For some, frustration with these labels has led to skepticism or even denial that things are as dire as they seem. In a strange role-reversal, children must now convince their parents to live by the rules created for our protection.

What an amazing opportunity we have in this moment to lay down our lives, to put the interests of others above our own. We are the ones who have learned what it means to be comforted by God's love through many trials and tribulations. Taking things seriously now may be the most meaningful way we have of passing this on, of pouring out tenderness and compassion on those most affected by the choices we make.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Ask God to give you his heart for people who are struggling with the weight of the pandemic that faces us. Pray specifically for those whose lives your choices affect most.

Practice: Send an email or letter to a government or health worker to let them know of your support and to encourage them.

Prayer Theme Four:

BODIES BREAKING DOWN

Scriptures: All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:15-18

Thoughts: Have you ever found yourself ten minutes into a litany of physical complaints with friends only to realize you've become the whiner you once disdained? How many of us vowed at one time or another that we would never expend our energy bemoaning our latest maladies like older folks seem prone to do?

Age is certainly no respecter of persons. At some point our physical bodies break down no matter how hard we've worked to stay fit. Our minds take flight with no rhyme or reason at random times, and our emotions have a field day when we're thrust into seasons of uncertainty. If we're not careful, we can gauge the worth of our lives by these things, and that can be pretty discouraging. Add to that a global pandemic in which seniors have the highest fatality rate, and we may just want to throw in the towel.

Yet if we'll take Scripture at its word and open our hearts to listen, we'll hear God reminding us that the truest thing about us is *not* what we see or feel or think, but our inner selves, the part of our

being that is gaining strength and vigor day by day. Taking the time to ponder these unseen realities and the eternal glory that awaits us will provide the perspective we need to deal with these *light and momentary afflictions*.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Spend a few minutes offering your body with all its parts, your mind, and your emotions to the Lord. Envision his tender care for all of it. Give thanks for the Spirit who comforts, guides and shapes your inner being, making it a beautiful treasure for eternity. End by praying for those who have become ill through this pandemic.

Practice: Today, each time you find yourself aware of a physical, mental or emotional limitation, take a minute to give thanks for the way God is working with you and in the unseen realm of eternity.

.....
Prayer Theme Five:

FEEDING THE DRAGON

Scriptures: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.
Philippians 4: 5-8

Thoughts: Most of us know from decades of experience that what we do matters, or as Scripture teaches, we reap what we sow. Why then, can we so easily slip into sowing seeds of anxiety or stress, knowing the harm this will bring to our mental, spiritual and emotional well-being? We feel like we ought to know better and yet can find ourselves struggling to crawl out of the mire that our worry has created.

Perhaps we are “feeding the dragon” of anxiety without realizing it. How? Some examples might be the constant trolling of social media or binge watching on Netflix or nattering on and on with friends about mundane things or filling ourselves with junk food. While these can be a momentary reprieve from our anxious thoughts, they don’t destroy the dragon of worry that waits to turn around and devour us.

Scripture provides an amazing alternative; a step by step guide that includes prayer, thanksgiving and laying our specific needs before God. This is how we starve the dragon and feed our souls. We train our minds to think of things that are true and pure, lovely and praiseworthy, until an uncommon peace settles like a shield around our hearts.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Ask the Holy Spirit to show you ways you might be feeding the dragon of stress or anxiety. Confess and receive not only forgiveness, but the filling of the Holy Spirit in place of these things. Pray for those who dealing with troubling news today and need an extra measure of grace.

Practice: Make a list of the words in Philippians 4:8 and write something you could think about today that fits the description. Keep the list handy, and when you find yourself tempted to feed the dragon of anxiety through unhealthy ways, take a few minutes to read through it aloud, thinking “on such things.”



Prayer Theme Six:

A STABILIZING PRESENCE

Scriptures: There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,... a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak. Ecclesiastes 3:1-2,4-5, 7

Thoughts: Only weeks into this world-wide pandemic, futurists are predicting how our lives are being irrevocably changed. Some suggest that social distancing will become the norm, with person-to-person interaction the exception. Others point out hopefully that this has the power to pull together a society that has heretofore been painfully polarized. Still others note that we are beginning to see how interrelated our lives really are—from the teenager who stocks our grocery shelves to the nurse who attends our ailing relatives to the news anchor who provides up-to-date information—we are interdependent in ways we may not have understood before.

While opinions about the future vary, most agree that this unprecedented pandemic will surely alter our way of being in the world. As seniors we can be a stabilizing presence through this, carrying a serenity that we’ve cultivated over a lifetime of upheaval. Having weathered many storms, we know better than anyone that while change is inevitable, this too shall pass.

For the sake of the world, let us set aside time daily to breathe deeply and contemplate biblical truth, to press into the presence of God and wait quietly for guidance and grace. From that place of quiet reflection, we can carry the reassuring hope that others so desperately need in our digital and personal worlds.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Set aside at least 20 minutes to be still in God’s presence today. Begin by breathing deeply until you feel physically and spiritually settled. Read Scriptures, pausing to listen for God’s gentle whisper. Ask for grace to bring the beauty of stillness into the chaos of your digital world today. Pray for the unseen workers who are keeping needed services going during this difficult season.

Practice: Write a note of encouragement via email or social media to someone whose life is being altered by this pandemic. It might be a single mom, a health-care worker, a restaurant owner or grocery clerk. Let them know how much you appreciate them and the work they are doing.

Prayer Theme Seven:

LAMENTING THROUGH LONELINESS

Scriptures: My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish. Look on my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins. Psalm 25:15-18

Thoughts: Loneliness can be the bane of a senior's life. Many of us have lost life-long spouses, while others face years without the presence of children or grandchildren who've moved away. Physical limitations may keep us from engaging with people as we once did, and the busyness that permeates other people's days can leave us with an uneasy sense of desolation. Empty hours stretch out ahead of us like chasms we don't know how to cross. The mandate to shelter-in-place in response to COVID-19 has exacerbated this for many seniors.

While there are many things with which to fill our time and activities that might alleviate the strain of loneliness, what we may need at times instead is to learn how to lament. This doesn't come easy—our religious upbringing and Christian culture have likely trained us to put on a happy face. It may seem unspiritual to name our pain or muse on our misery.

But sharing honestly with God what is on our hearts—without judgement or critique—can bring surprising relief. The prophets and psalmists in Scripture have shown us how to lament, perhaps because they understood that this spiritual discipline is tailor-made for loneliness, with the power to lift our spirits and soothe our souls.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Write a prayer of lament that includes the following: a simple expression of your loneliness, a petition for God to bring relief, a praise for who God is, and thanksgiving for how he answers prayer. Some examples of Lament Psalms are: Psalm 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 85 & 90.

Practice: Many lament Psalms in Scripture are communal. Gather with a friend or two online and write a Psalm of Lament together related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the situations that people face as a result. Share it on social media.

Prayer Theme Eight:

SIDELINED

Scriptures: This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord. Jeremiah 9:23-24

Thoughts: As of this writing, one in four Americans and millions of others world-wide are under shelter-in-place mandates, a consequence of the rapid spread of COVID-19, which just weeks ago could not have been imagined. Because early data indicated that seniors were at greater risk of dying from the virus, we were the first to be asked to stay home. With the best of intentions, our children and grandchildren let us know that they wouldn’t be coming around.

As a people group well acquainted with feeling sidelined by a culture that idolizes youth, this has dealt one more blow to our sense of significance. What might God have for us when we feel sidelined, whether through normal social norms or this global pandemic? How are we to respond when others don’t seek our wisdom, or our physical bodies lack strength, or our financial security is ripped out from under us?

The prophet Jeremiah, facing a terrifying future, reminds us that troubling times have the power to pull us back to what really matters. He offers a simple mandate—to know God and live as his people—in kindness, justice and righteousness. Not only does this bring God delight but we have the awesome privilege of experiencing his pleasure. Feeling sidelined can provide the perfect opportunity to embrace this central tenet of our faith.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Offer a prayer of surrender and release to God related to any ways you may have felt sidelined by your age. Turn the words of Jeremiah 9:23-24 into a prayer of affirmation back to God. Pray for someone you know who might be feeling insignificant today.

Practice: Encourage someone who needs to know they are not sidelined. Tell them specifically how their life has ministered to you.

.....
Prayer Theme Nine:

STEWARDED GRACE

Scriptures: Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so

with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:8-11

Thoughts: How do you tend to respond in seasons of uncertainty? Do you move quickly into problem-solving mode or feel more like crawling into a hole until it passes? The day by day crises that have been thrust upon us by this global pandemic have been frustrating at best and debilitating at worst for most of us.

Psychologists suggest that repeated exposure to this kind of situation can create something called *learned helplessness*. What does this look like? We begin to believe that nothing we do will change anything, so we simply stop trying, even when there are things that we could do. Once that happens, depression can easily overtake us.

But the beautiful truth is that God has graced each of us in unique ways that even the worst pandemic in global history can't take away. Our call is to steward these gifts with the strength God promises to provide. This may look different as we shelter-in-place and maintain social distance, but it is no less important. Little things are going to mean a lot—a choice to cover others' mistakes with love, to open our hearts wide, to refuse to grumble and complain. We speak God's words—through a phone call here, a message of encouragement there, or just being a positive presence online. We serve others by listening well when they need to talk. Stewarding the graces God has given each of us is the antidote to *learned helplessness*, as God is praised and his glory exalted.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Take some time to listen for God's voice today, asking these questions: Lord, what unique gifts have you given me that I could use during this time of uncertainty? Who would you like me to serve today, and how? As you wait before the Lord, jot down what you hear. End with a time of thanksgiving for the graces God has uniquely given you.

Practice: Act on the things you heard in prayer with a commitment to steward God's grace in at least three specific ways today.

.....
Prayer Theme Ten:

TRUE PROVISION

Scriptures: Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Thoughts: Watching the stock market tumble as COVID-19 spread across the globe has been painful for those of us who carefully planned for our future, setting aside funds to provide for us in old age.

Although we know intuitively that God is our provider, for many of us, having a retirement nest egg has enabled us to sleep a lot better at night. But in what seems like an instant, all of that is gone, and we wonder if we'll ever recover that sense of security.

Paul's admonition to Timothy about these things is as timely as any Scripture could possibly be. While planning, saving and securing our financial future is a healthy practice, Paul cautions us that there is an arrogance in putting our hope in these things because in the end we are trusting in ourselves, and not God. Yet it can be hard to recognize we are doing this until the props have been pulled out from under us.

There are hidden blessings in this season of uncertainty, and one of the most meaningful could be a better understanding of where we've been putting our hope. God is giving us the chance to look more intently to him as our provider, to discover the greater joy of generosity, of freely sharing what little we may have, and in so doing, laying up treasures for eternity. This is how we *take hold of the life that is truly life*.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Ask God's Spirit to help you see any ways your hope has been in something other than him. Write an affirmation of prayer based on Paul's words to Timothy, listing everything this passage promises. Pray for those who have lost jobs and do not know where their next paycheck or even meal will come from.

Practice: Go for a walk today if weather allows, and as you do, name aloud everything God has given you to enjoy.

Prayer Theme Eleven:

WHO AM I?

Scriptures: My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you. Psalm 139:15-18

Thoughts: Whether we like it or not, we are products of a performance driven society, ever prone to see ourselves as "doers," to define ourselves by the accomplishments we can name. At our age, we feel we ought to be able to cast these identity issues aside like a worn-out robe, yet if we're honest, we still struggle to grasp our own worth, to see ourselves as God's image-bearers. This is surely magnified by mandates to shelter-in-place that leave us with little to do. This lack of *doing* unsettles us.

If we have ears to hear, we can trust that the God who formed us in our mother's womb is even now declaring his love into our unsettledness, affirming that he thinks about us more than we'll ever know. Even when we sleep, God gazes upon us, ordaining our steps moment by moment.

Sheltering-in-place can become a precious treasure as we set our hearts to receive God's love afresh. In quietness we wait before him, asking for a taste of his tender care. As we wait, we begin to grasp at the core of our being that our value has never been in our *doing*, but in our *belonging* to the One who loves us with unbounded passion.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: The saints of old spoke of God's *consolations*, referring to those moments when God meets us and reveals something of his character, ways or heart. Take some time today to contemplate God's love, asking the Spirit to reveal it to you in a fresh way. Pray for orphans all over the world who have never experienced the love of a parent today.

Practice: Write out Romans 5:1-5 in a version you don't normally use. Read it aloud just before you go to sleep tonight.

Prayer Theme Twelve:

LETTING OTHERS IN

Scriptures: Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." John 13:3-9

Thoughts: Jesus once famously noted that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Most teachings or sermons on his words tend to focus on the giver, but what if there is another principle hidden there, one that might be especially valuable as we face this season? In short, what if we could see that our ability to receive from others frees them to experience the blessing of giving, that when we don't open our hearts to another's care, we short-circuit cycle God has for us and for them.

Like Peter who resisted when Jesus bent to wash his feet, many of us find it hard to receive. It can seem awkward to be served, to let another care for us. We may feel exposed by our neediness or fear becoming a burden. As the giver, we feel safer, more in control. But in this story, Jesus seems to suggest that when we let someone serve us, a special connection takes place that bonds our hearts together.

As seniors we may have many opportunities to be on the receiving end during this season, and perhaps it's time for us to learn how. Remembering that in receiving we actually bless the giver, can make the experience uniquely meaningful for us both.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Make a list of the various ways that God gives to you or serves you. Speak each thing aloud, expressing gratitude for these things as you envision God's joy in being the giver. Pray for people who spend their lives serving others in the healthcare system.

Practice: For the next day or two, ask God to show you opportunities to receive from others. Practice being on the receiving end and consider the joy you are enabling others to experience through this.

Prayer Theme Thirteen:

RESONANCE OR RESISTANCE?

Scriptures: He said to the crowd: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time? "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? Luke 12:54-57

Thoughts: As pilgrims on this end of life's journey, we have traveled many pathways. Through scores of seasons and stations along the way, we've known struggle and success, joy and despair, smooth sailing and stormy seas, deepening relationships and bitter breakups. All of this has prepared us to be a people of *resonance*, which is the ability to step back and grasp what is happening within the grand scheme of things, to understand the larger picture within which current events are taking place.

When we live out of *resonance*, we emanate peace instead of panic and faith instead of fear. Jesus called this knowing how to *interpret this present time*. Without resonance, we can find ourselves resistant, our narrow perspectives binding our hearts as our voices spew discontent.

Resonance is the fruit of spiritual discipline. We embody it as we learn to sit quietly with the Lord of the Universe, daily letting his perspective wash over our souls. We learn to let Scripture shape our worldview, inviting the Spirit to open the eyes of our hearts to what is true. Practicing *resonance* is learning to judge what is right. It can be as natural as seeing a cloud and expecting rain or feeling the south wind and knowing a heat spell is on its way.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Ask God to give you *resonance*, the ability to see the bigger picture of what he is doing in the world today. Intercede on that basis for all those who are living in fear of this pandemic, or do not have the peace of knowing Jesus personally.

Practice: As your day ends, consider whether you have been resistant (complaining, grumbling, stressing out) or resonant (seeing things through God's perspective and living on that basis). Ask for wisdom and grace to approach tomorrow with a spiritual viewpoint that honors God and encourages others.



Prayer Theme Fourteen:

A TIME TO RECALIBRATE

Scriptures: Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the Lord; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken. Psalm 15:1-5

Thoughts: As you look back over the landscape of your life, what are the moments of greatest impact? Are there memories of events that you know altered your path? You probably think of those big experiences like getting married, or having children, or obtaining that degree, or launching your last child off to college or landing (or losing) your dream job or moving across the country or the world. But most of us have also found that God has used seasons of uncertainty to get our attention, to call us to pause and evaluate our lives, to make critical changes and much-needed course corrections.

This pandemic and the mandate to shelter-in-place offers us an incredible opportunity to revisit our core values, to consider how we have been spending our resources of time, money or energy and to recalibrate. Not only does the prospect of succumbing to a disease that is spreading like wildfire across the globe deepen our awareness of what matters, but we have a gift of time and solitude that is unusual, even for seniors.

To that end, let's not waste this rare opportunity. May we hear the God of the universe gently calling us to ponder our lives and invite his Spirit to change those things that might keep us from living joyfully for God's purposes with the time we have left.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Pray this old hymn—either singing, writing or speaking the words as you wait in God's presence: *Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love...Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee. Take my voice,*

and let me sing always, only, for my King...Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee. Take my silver and my gold; Not a mite would I withhold.

Practice: Spend a few minutes today identifying three core values by which you want to live your life. Write them down. Beside each one, consider how God might be inviting you to make a change as you move toward the future.

Prayer Theme Fifteen:

THE GIFT OF LONGEVITY

Scriptures: The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.” Psalm 92:12-15

Thoughts: Not long ago, the news for seniors was increasingly positive. We were living longer, working longer, enjoying higher education and becoming a greater percentage of the total population every day. From *baby boomers* to the *silent generation* to the *greatest generation*, those over 65 were considered by politicians and pundits alike, a force to be reckoned with. How rapidly all of this shifted when the data from COVID-19 began to emerge and predictions of the death rate in our age bracket skyrocketed.

But here’s the thing. God is the one who has numbered our days, and for every one of us who have breath in our lungs, this is not the time to shrink back, but to fully embrace the gift of longevity, to mine it for all it is worth. Planted in God’s heart, we are still growing strong, we will flourish, we will continue to bear fruit, and we carry within us fresh offerings for a broken and needy world.

No other generation can offer what we have, and no matter how weak or inept we might feel, God has called us for such a time as this. Why? Because we alone can testify with authenticity and conviction of God’s sustaining power over six decades and more. We know from the depths of our being a reality that others are just beginning to see; that the God who has been our Rock continues to be so, and will until the day we see him face to face.

Pause and Reflect: Use the questions from the Reflect Guide to ponder, share and/or discuss these things.

Prayer: Thank God for the gift of longevity. Where you may have seen lack, express words of praise. Where you may have felt frustration, offer words of gratitude. Where you have lacked faith for your future as God’s ambassador to a broken world, speak God’s promises over the coming days.

Practice: Make a list of the blessings that longevity has given you. Then write an affirmation of how you want to use these gifts as we press into this unprecedented season of uncertainty.