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DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES



Return to the Father

40-Days of Prayer & Fasting
for **Lost Loved Ones**

Wed. October 14 – Sun. November 22, 2015



BY ANDREW COMISKEY

'The mercy of God is not an abstract idea but a concrete reality through which He reveals His love as that of a mother or father, moved to the very depths out of love for their child.' POPE FRANCIS, THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

Many of you face painful relationships with persons you love deeply due to a clash of moral values, especially regarding gender and sexuality. Of course we cannot make anyone else's moral decision. But we can decide to pray, which we at Desert Stream Ministries will do for 40 days on behalf of lost loved ones at 3pm daily, CST. Will you join us at whatever time you can?

This newsletter is a prayer guide that begins on Wed. Oct. 14th and ends on Sunday Nov. 22nd. Together, we will cry out for mercy for our loved ones, knowing that only the Father

through the Son by the Spirit can reorient them according to His best and truest will. So we shall pray hard together. We the faithful need to pray or else we can come under a spirit of fear, control, strife and even despair, all which distort the beautiful mercy Jesus has entrusted to us.

Drawing daily upon Psalm 116, we will reflect upon how merciful God has been to us in our sins and wounds; we will then ask Him for a double portion of that mercy to extend to loved ones far from the Father's house. He awaits them and sees them

this very moment. May God use these days to give us His sight for lost loved ones. We shall also lift up His bride the Church, asking her Bridegroom to help us embody truthful grace in these days of disintegrating gender identities.

We would ask as you pray with us that you give up something of value during these days. As you go without, we ask that God would grant you the freedom to linger a bit longer in His presence. Let whatever 'hunger' you experience be a reminder of the greater need someone else has for your merciful prayers. 

'...So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.'

LUKE 15:20b





'I love the Lord for He heard my voice

He heard my cry for mercy... I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.

Then I called on the name of the Lord: "O Lord, save me!"

Psalm 116: 1, 3b, 4

October 14-18

'I love the Lord for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy.

Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live.

The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me;

I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.

Then I called on the name of the Lord: "O Lord, save me!" (Ps 116:1-4)

Wednesday October 14th:

We begin our fasting and prayer time by recognizing the power of God's mercy in our own lives. Perhaps God primes us to pray for others as we remember God's goodness to us. Out of the overflow, we can ask Him to be just as merciful to our loved ones.

Perhaps you have a few loved ones in mind. You are aware of their weaknesses and perhaps of the bad choices they have made. That distresses us because we want more for their good lives. Alas, we can make no-one do the right thing! Though we cannot make another's choices, we do have a choice. We can pray.

I chose a deeply personal Psalm in which David celebrates God's saving work in his life. I hope we might consider the ways God has mercifully met us, over and over again. As we consider His saving grace over the course of these forty days, graces He gave us due to His goodness, not ours, might we align ourselves with our merciful God on behalf of others? St. Paul expressed it best when he heralded the merciful God 'who comforts us in our affliction that we might comfort others in any affliction with the comfort we have received from Him' (2 Cor 1:3-5).

'As You have been merciful to us, O God, have mercy on ____. Reveal Your saving love to ____.'

Thursday October 15th:

How do we understand the truth that the God of the Universe stooped down to hear our cry and answered it (Ps 116:1, 2)? Consider His saving action in your life. What did He save you from? Some of your prayers have yet to be answered. But some have been: what are the specific ways you asked Him for help and He delivered you? Maybe you cannot yet relate to 'the anguish of the grave.' But you have doubtlessly known 'trouble and sorrow' (v.4). What impact did such answered prayer have on your trouble and sorrow? On your faith?

'As you have met us very specifically in Your saving love, O God, we ask You to meet __ in his/her trouble or sorrow.'

Friday October 16th:

Maybe the story of the lost son relates to our own homecoming. Luke 15:11-32 describes how the prodigal kid ventured out from his/her father's house in search of a sexier, more exciting season. What happened when you wandered from the faith of your youth in search of more exotic deities? How did God use the brokenness of sin to break ground in your heart?

How did He meet you? 'While you were still a long way off', how did you perceive 'your Father, full of compassion and running toward you then throwing His arms around you and kissing you?' (Lk 15:20) Recall what influenced your slow turning back to Him. Delight in the memory of His sweet embrace even when you could barely behold Him.

'As You ran to us, would You run after ____? In Your infinite mercy, help him/her to turn to You. Please close the gap between ____ and Your beautiful Presence.'

Saturday October 17th:

For many of us, our prodigal days are long gone. We now sin quietly, like the elder sibling of the lost child. We may have grown weary in well-doing, and a little dull to your saving work because our sins are now less obvious. But according to the story, our 'religious' sins are no less real and certainly no less in need of His mercy. May we welcome afresh God's promise to us: 'My child, you are always with me and everything I have is yours' (Lk 15:31).

'Remind us, O God, of how much we need Your mercy. Remove all deception that we need You less as we grow spiritually; we need You more. Show us the treasury of Your mercy once more. In all our distress, show us the surpassing great-

ness of Your love for us. As always, please open ___'s eyes to that treasury as well.'

Sunday October 18th:

Bible stories are sweet but the Cross is sweeter. Jesus' self-giving at Calvary is the answer to the prodigal Father's promise to the elder child: 'Everything I have is yours.' God could give us no more than His own life. And what abundance: blood to transfuse our tired blood, water to

cleanse our sin, His spirit released in dying and the Holy Spirit in His rising, the Source of our new life! God's merciful love at Calvary released a current of transformational love that cannot be stopped. He saved us through its healing flood: He can save your beloved too. He gives everything He has to children who cry out for mercy.

'Open the eyes of our hearts to Your Cross Current. Open ___'s heart, we pray.' 🙏

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

October 19-23

02

'The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, He saved me.' (Ps 116: 5, 6)

Monday October 19th:

When the Lord proclaimed Himself to Moses, He did not first name Himself as creator or judge; He declared Himself: 'The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness' (Ex 34:6). More than anything else, our God wants to act mercifully toward His wounded creation. Yet for the wounded, it is difficult to let go of man-made securities. We may assume He is first our judge, an adversary who will only be appeased if we become completely different people. Mercy woos us, gently, and breaks like small waves upon our defensive hearts. Will we open to Unfailing Love?

'O God, open our hearts to who You are: abounding in love and faithfulness. Forgive the many ways we disqualify ourselves from Your love. Help us to welcome Your love and as we do, help us to entrust ___ to its superabundance.'

Tuesday October 20th:

When we discover that someone we love is making moral choices that we believe are wrong, it hurts us. Just as sin wounds our loved ones, so that sin wounds us. For them! Regardless, we now bear a wound that needs healing. Our healing does not come from the loved one's repentance. It comes from our turning to Jesus and crying out for Him to save us from fear, vain speculation, and strife. We discover that God is using another's sin to anchor us more thoroughly in His saving action toward us. He is first interested in our conversion.

'Jesus, make this wound holy. Unite our wound to Yours; help us to know You there. When we are

tempted to spiral downward, gently remind us to trust You. Keep the wound clean and soft through mercy alone. Use this heartache to make us more whole. You alone are trustworthy. Open ___'s wound to Your love even as we are discovering Your love there too.'

Wednesday October 21st:

I love these words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'Whoever lives under the Cross of Jesus Christ finds that no sin can ever be alien to him.' That means that we who know the afflicting power of sin cannot judge another's sin as worse than our own. It means that we are learning to trust Jesus as the Source of our lives and are not given the grace to know how or when our loved one will join us. All we know is that God gives the same mercy that is saving us to all who cry out for it. We can also know that Jesus is the answer to their heart's cry, before they do.

'Jesus, You are the answer. Your saving love is the only cure for sin-weary hearts. May we live beneath Your Cross and trust its relevance for all persons, regardless of different expressions of sin and need.'

Thursday October 22nd:

'You protect the simplehearted' (Ps 116:6). Through these trials, God reduces us to the shelter of His mercy. He throws us off our game—our gifts, our smarts. What we thought we knew we no longer know. We do not trust in ourselves in the same way but are learning to live closer to Him, broken, yet joined with the Source of all wholeness. St. Faustina

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'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.'

Luke 10:21



October 19-23

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wrote in her diary: 'Humility is nothing but the truth.' (1502) The truth is 'without Him, we can do nothing' (Jn 15:5). But we are getting to know Him! Truly 'He hides these things from the wise and learned and reveals them to little children' (Lk 10:21), adult kids like us.

'Thank you for reducing us so You can protect us. Free us to be small before You so we can trust ourselves wholly to Your care. Quiet the many voices that agitate our loved ones; free them to become like children again, open and yielded to Your still small voice.'

Friday October 23rd:

Let us ask God to remind us of the ways He met us when we were lost, knowing the truth and yet disoriented, in need of guidance to get clear and

stay clear. I marvel at this little seen reference to mercy in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19 describes the perverse nightmare out of which God called Lot and his family before He destroyed the cities. Lot was a good guy but he hesitated to act decisively; perhaps spiritual darkness impaired him and he faltered when the angels implored him to lead his family out of the judgment-to-come. Here the word 'mercy' appears for the first time in Scripture. 'The men (angelic beings) grasped Lot's hand and the hands of his family and led them out of the city, **for the Lord was merciful to them**' (Gen 19: 16). Mercy alone saves us. 'When we were in great need, You saved us' (Ps 116:6).

'God, thank You for showing mercy to us, even and especially when sin impaired our judgment. We have hesitated at times to obey You but You have not hesitated to show Your mercy to us. Thank you, saving God.'

**'Rejoice
for you are
closer to
God in His
mercy than
a baby
to its
mother's
heart'**

St. Faustina's Diary
(423)

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

October 24-28

03

'Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.' (Ps 116:7)

Saturday October 24th:

We can rest in the truth that God is the perfect parent, containing aspects of the best human mother and father and surpassing them both. Consider the way He fought for our dignity amid the many indignities to which we were inclined. He made a way for you to know Him and to submit ourselves to His best for our lives. When our vision was too low, He elevated it and gave us courage to pursue that vision. His unfailing love has fathered us better than any person could. We can rest in His clear and constant masculine love for us.

'You have fathered us well, living God. May we rest in the truth that You will never cease to act toward us like the tender, almighty Father You are. As You have only used Your power to empower us, would You do the same for ____?'

Sunday October 25th:

Deeper still, we long for that source of love that frees us to rest in God's presence like a baby rests on its mother's breast. Nothing better represents the rest Jesus has won for us than a babe asleep in a whole mother's arms. 'Rejoice', writes St.

Faustina, 'for you are closer to God in His mercy than a baby to its mother's heart' (Diary, 423). Amid all our concerns, including anxieties over loved ones' choices, we can stop and rest in the merciful bond of love we share with our God. Nothing or no-one satisfies like He does.

'Teach us to nestle in Your arms. We who are weary and heavy-laden with many concerns, teach us to draw quietly and deeply from Your sheltering, maternal love. As You quiet us, we entrust to You once more those we love who need Your merciful rest. May their restless hearts find peace in You.'

Monday October 26th:

We who are nearest to loved ones who have strayed, especially parents of wandering children, struggle with our inadequacy as caregivers. Could I have loved better and prevented the problem? Especially if one concedes that family life is a big influence on members' sexual development/self-giving, we may get stuck on self-doubts, even self-hatred for our perceived failure as parents. We do well to recall that every human parent is but a dim window of what our kids need more than anything: the Father who fills in every gap for sinners who cry out for His mercy.

‘Our weaknesses as friends and family members create unrest. In Your goodness, train us to entrust our loved ones to You. Please be for them what we cannot be—the perfect parent. Have mercy on our inadequacies; use everything, even our failures to love well, to draw these ones to You, the Love that satisfies.’

Tuesday October 27th:

We must confess our fears, the threat of misdirected loved ones coming to a bitter end. We confess how some of these fears keep us up at night; we rehearse dark scenarios and wake up wasted, impaired for the day. God wants us to say with the Psalmist: ‘Be at rest; the Lord has been good to you.’ One key when you find yourself tossing and turning at night is to welcome His mercy in your bed. The New Testament word for mercy is ‘eleos’, which means oil poured out. When the Church cries out ‘Christie Eleison’, she prays ‘Jesus pour out Your mercy on us like oil from heaven.’

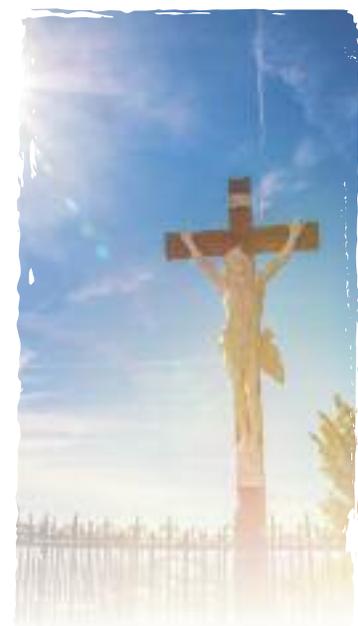
‘Christie Eleison; Jesus pour out the oil of Your mercy on us in this dark night. We trust in You

and we entrust ____ to You.’

Wednesday October 28th:

Pope Francis writes that ‘the mercy of God is not an abstract idea but a concrete reality by which He reveals His love as that of a father or a mother who is moved to the very depths out of love for their child.’ If we ache with desire for God’s saving work in a loved one’s life, how much more does God? Mercy issues out of His divine ache for our wandering ones. May we unite ourselves in prayer with His ache and learn to entrust the beloved to Him. That is not a cop out. It is the wisdom of recognizing that He is the saving God and you are not. Rest in Him.

‘Forgive us for trying to be You. Though we want to be more like You, we are created beings who needs constantly to be saved by You. Thank you for teaching us of our need for mercy through the more exotic sin of another. Purge our love of fear and strife; may love arise out of trustful rest in You, saving God.’ 🙏



‘...you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.’

1 Thes. 4: 13b-14

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

October 29 – November 2

04

For You, O Lord have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living’ (PS 116: 8,9).

Thursday October 29th:

David describes sin as disorienting, at least. The above verses describe sorrow and staggering along the way of life, leading to an early death. That’s the truth about sin—it is wrong because it hurts us. And God loves us enough to reveal our misery as to provoke us to discover the level path He makes for us. St. Faustina put it best: ‘The knowledge of my own misery frees me to know the immensity of Your mercy’ (Diary, 56). We can learn to see through our weaknesses the strong loving God who goes ahead of us and blazes a trail on which we ‘the lame will not be disabled but healed’ (Heb 12:13).

‘Thank you for alerting us to sin’s power so that we can stop hurting and start healing. Open the eyes of our hearts to the afflicting power of sin so that we can know more fully the delivering power of Your mercy.’

Friday October 30th:

When we are hurt or disappointed by a loved one, we run the risk of sinning in a subtle way. Our hearts can grow hard, not through an offense that starts with us but through taking offense at another’s sin (Heb 3:13). Such can be the case for a loved one whose sin betrays our trust. My wife Annette had a brother whose immoral life wreaked havoc on her family. When God asked her to care for him later in his life, she needed God to deliver her from her hardness of heart. He put her back on the path of life as Annette forgave him for the specific offenses she held in her heart. Sin’s misery can be surpassed by mercy!

‘God, do not let our hearts grow hard through the deceitfulness of another’s sin. Reveal the hardening of our arteries and make us me soft through Your mercy. We pray for ____ and ask that You would not hold these sins against him/her.’

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'But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes its leaves are always green.'
 Jeremiah 17: 7-8a

October 29-November 2

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Saturday October 31st:

Sometimes we sin in response to a loved one's bad choices by agreeing with them. Why? We would rather make peace than start a family war. Though understandable, we must always seek to please God rather than man. Besides, truth is truth; if sin really harms people, than why agree with what we know will only do damage to the loved one? The way of love is stern and splendid and at times provokes division, not peace (Lk 12:49-53). We know we are following Jesus in the land of the living when we die to false peace and live for truthful love.

'God, give us the courage of my convictions. Free us to express with evident love our concerns. Be our comfort in every rejection we face for truth's sake.'

Sunday November 1st:

Sometimes the 'death' we experience is not physical but emotional. Despair can result from the convergence of others' bad choices and rejection. Paul describes despair as 'the worldly sorrow that brings forth death' (2 Cor 7:10); it differs from good painful emotion in that our grief does not open us up to the suffering God but rather clamps

down upon us like an airtight cocoon. Locked in by debilitating sorrow, we cannot get out of bed, let alone make it. When our suffering has turned in on itself, we need the delivering hand of God's mercy. We must get out of bed and walk with God, refusing the lure of death.

'Father, may Your mercy free us from the spirit of death. We choose the life You won for us. Deliver us from the morbid path; free us for the way of Life.'

Monday November 2nd:

We now have a little cross—the suffering we bear because someone we love is staggering around in sin, hurting themselves and those (s)he loves. But 'we do not grieve as those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again' (1 Thess 4: 13, 14) and so we suffer in the bright light of new life shining upon this cross! God makes our suffering good; we bear this cross knowing that He has overcome the sin at hand, whether or not the sinner is cooperating. Hope does not disappoint those whose hope is in the One who bore the Cross and broke sin's back once and for all.

'Father, free us to behold the light of life shining on this cross; become our hope for the help of our beloved. May we not allow another's bad choices to leech the light of Your life and love from our lives. We want to shine, even in suffering.'

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

November 3-7

05

'I believed; therefore I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.' And in my dismay I said, 'All men are liars.'"(Ps 116:10, 11)

Tuesday November 3rd:

Let's face it. Being an orthodox Christian in the area of gender and sexuality puts us at odds with the noisy popular culture. In education, media and arts, and politics, we laud gender confusion and denounce anyone who does not. Believing that God has a plan for the sexual clarity and chastity of His kids is hard. It makes us a minority who at best is deemed ignorant, and probably hateful. We who believe God are afflicted by the majority culture. More painful still, this war is waged in our families. We must dig deeper to discover the artesian well of mercy that underlies these non-negotiable truths.

'Father, grant us mercy as we to seek to live in accord with Your truth. Show us Your mercy for persons who oppose the truth, especially for _____.'

Wednesday November 4th:

Precisely because we do believe in God, we can own our affliction and cry out for the help we need to stay true to Him. For myself, sometimes all I need is one sweet inspired reminder of His kindness to me; this kindness primes my heart and frees me to feel the pain I bear and to express it.

'God, we are afflicted and in small ways rejected. May we understand this light affliction as a sharing in Your suffering. Our belief in You and Your ways sets us apart from loved ones. May we bear

this cross patiently and mercifully through Your abiding Presence.'

Thursday November 5th:

Because we believe in You, we know in faith that You are at work. Beyond what is evident, we trust Your sovereign plan for the world and for our families. You alone use all things to work for the good of persons seeking Your face (Rom 8:28).

'We seek Your face O God, trusting that even this light and momentary trouble will be played forward for the setting free of many captives. We offer up our affliction for the saving of lives, especially for the saving of ____'s life.'

Friday November 6th:

We must confess the dismay we experience in a world that has lost its bearings in the area of gender and sexuality. We confess with the Psalmist: 'All men are liars!' Darkness is now light, what is sour appears sweet, and real integrity is nowhere to be found. We are surrounded and sickened by the glamorizing of perversion. Lord have mercy on us!

'God, might You give us the strength to hold fast

to Your truth? At the same time, grant us mercy and faith to believe in Your saving love for persons caught in the riptide of immorality, especially ____.'

Saturday November 7th:

Another translation of v. 11b reads: 'Men are all a vain hope.' One advantage of being counter-cultural is that we must rely more on God than on common opinion. In other words, our roots can extend deeper into God when we realize the limits, even the deception, of our fellow humanity. 'Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength...But blessed is the man who trusts in God, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes. It has no worries in a year of drought, and never fails to bear fruit' (Jer 17: 5-8).

'Grants us the grace to extend our roots deeper in You, O God. May our disillusion be transformed by Your goodness. Remove any sting of bitterness. I forgive ____ for disappointing me. We want to be free for You, free for truth and mercy.'



Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For

everyone who asks receives;

the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.'

Matthew 7:7-8

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

November 8-12

06

'How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness toward me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people' (Ps 116: 12-14).

Sunday November 8th:

Rooted in God, provoked by hostile terrain to plunge deeper into our Source, we partake of His goodness. He nearly overwhelms us with 'living water'—the essence and fruit of His suffering. We live out of His blood, His washing, His Spirit. He offers us Himself in the holy meal; our cup runs over. How to repay this God who gives all, again and again? We lift up the cup of salvation, which is nothing less than a grateful life, inebriated by mercy. Saved by His goodness, we live to declare His goodness.

'We agree with St. Catherine when she exclaims "In Christ Crucified we can do anything!" May our lives become a continual offering to You who gave all for us. Light and tend the fire through continual gratitude for Your unfailing love for us.'

Monday November 9th:

Our foundational action is prayer; we make known our requests in a spirit of gratitude to the One who saved us. 'Ask, seek, knock' implores Jesus (Mt 7: 7, 8). Through child-like prayer, we lift up burdens too great for us and entrust them to sturdy eternal shoulders. Then we rest in the shelter of His presence. When we surrender loved ones to those shoulders, God invites them into that same restful presence.

'Make our lives a prayer to You, O God. Teach us to entrust ____ to Your size once more. You know that one far better than we do; Your will be done, Your Kingdom come to him/her, we pray.'

Tuesday November 10th:

Prayer prepares us, as the Spirit leads, to be an

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November 8-12

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answer to our own plea. We are Christ's body. When He animates us to become His 'member' for a loved one, we must act. For those of us who are strong-willed and overbearing in zeal (guilty), the Spirit may subdue us. Our muted response may speak more lovingly than many 'true' words. I recall Dean's homecoming where he announced his gay, HIV status to stunned pastor/parents. They wept and gently expressed mercy, preaching a sermon wordlessly to a son who could finally 'hear' love.

'Make us an answer to our own prayers. May we convey love and speak authentically. Let words flow from our hearts, our wellspring of love for ____.'

Wednesday November 11th:

Prayer also prepares us to love actively, especially when part of the problem has been our neglect of the loved one. Of course it also implies the loved one wants our presence! Such was the case of a 16-year-old struggling with same-sex attraction whose Dad discovered his problem. He acted. Dad changed his life in order to enter his son's, forging a bond with him before it was too late. It is

working. The father is summoning in love his son's masculine clarity. Timely.

'Alert us, O God, when we are to act sacrificially on behalf of persons who need our presence to know Yours. Give us discernment and endurance to do our part. I lift up ____ and ask for such discernment. Here I am God, send me.'

Thursday November 12th:

Prayer activates the sacrifice—ourselves. Out of gratitude for God and His unfailing goodness to us, we fulfill our vows by giving ourselves to His service. That means serving any or all who God calls us to serve. Some of our loved ones don't want our service. Guess what? There are thousands of spiritual children who do! May love be greater than fear! Jesus warns us to not hide our 'talent' (gift/offering) for fear of messing up (Mt 25:25). We must overcome that fear. Our freedom depends on it, as does the liberation of many. Jesus, lead on.

"Perfect love casts out fear" (1 Jn 4:18), so we ask that You who perfect love would grant us the courage to overcome fear in our self-giving. May we fulfill our vows to You out of gratitude. Set afire this sacrifice, for holy, saving purposes.' 🙏



Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

BUT IF IT DIES, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.'

John 12:24-25

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

November 13-17

07

'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. O Lord, truly I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have freed me from my chains.' (Ps 116: 15, 16)

Friday November 13th:

Precious is our death. I interpret this in light of Jesus' words about the kernel dying, being broken, in order to release many tiny seeds (Jn 12:24). I witnessed this powerfully at a recent conference where many gathered who had been impacted by homosexuality. The brokenness was evident, especially among the parents of children with SSA. As we waited in line for communion, I saw with the eyes of my heart the 'whack' of a huge stick that had struck down these ones. But instead of retreating, they stood back up, took communion, and began to sow seed from the depths of their wound. Precious and fruitful is our death.

'Teach us to surrender to You, Father, at our point of wounding. Open our eyes to how You have made our wounds fruitful. Give us a glimpse of our precious death.'

Saturday November 14th:

To serve God we must see as He sees. We who have been wounded by sexual sin and brokenness may be tempted by a kind of defensiveness, a judgmental heart toward the unrepentant. But as Jesus heals our wounds, He frees us from the chains of such judgment. He frees us to see what He sees. St. Faustina writes: 'To see the image of God in everyone—all love of neighbor must flow from this motive...may I never judge or suspect

from appearances but look for what is beautiful in my neighbor's soul' (Diary, 861, 82).

'Free us from the chains of defensive sight. You looked at the lost as sheep without a shepherd and felt only compassion. Help us to behold _____ as a precious wounded sheep who is being prepared for his/her good Shepherd.'

Sunday November 15th:

Another chain Jesus wants to break is our tendency to put people in categories, sizing them up and reducing them to pointless distinctions like gay/straight, unclean/clean, broken/whole, etc. All are created to become good gifts for their fellow humanity, dignified expressions of our God. Let us seek the purity of heart and eye that refuses to categorize but rather summons the original good in persons which no sin can destroy.

'Father, as You have freed us from our chains, might we behold others and especially _____ as freed from theirs? Grant us Your vision for those lives that especially challenge us.'

Monday November 16th:

Prayer helps us always to draw upon the One who possesses exquisite awareness of what another needs. As we seek to be good gifts to persons in tough places, we do well to prayerfully ask the Spirit to sensitively guide our offering to them. 'We should

ask God for light to know how to deal with each one, for each soul is a world of its own' (Diary 568).

'Grant us, Holy Spirit, Your guidance in how to love others well. Give us awareness of their needs, especially _____'s needs, that our offering might coincide with what You want for them.'

Tuesday November 17th:

We die in order to live joyfully for God and His saving will for others. The Father frees us from fear and for His joy, over and over. Not long ago, I was walking into a hotel and a thirty-something Hispanic man looked at me with hungry eyes, trying to get my attention. I did not want to engage with him but God did. I remembered Christopher West's words: 'If we are to evangelize sinners we must be secure enough to not be evangelized by them.' I circled back and began to chat with him about his job (he was a flight attendant awaiting a shuttle) then about the love of the Father for him. He admitted his mistrust of religion and his crazy need for God. It seems that his sister had just died and left her child in his care. This kind, confused man had just become a father! Hours earlier he had cried out for divine help; he freely received my prayer for him as an answer to his.

'Father, open our eyes to the persons around us so in need of the Father's love. Make our joy full in loving obedience to Your Spirit's prompting.'



'I will search for the lost and bring back the strays.

I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy.

I will shepherd the flock with justice.'

Ezekiel 34:16

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

November 18-22

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'I will sacrifice a thank offering to You, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the house of the Lord—in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord' (Ps 116: 17-19).

Wednesday November 18th:

We sacrifice a thank offering—what can that mean? In allowing God to make our wounds fruitful, we must choose to thank Him for that painful privilege. We may be reminded often of what pains us but in thankful submission to His purposes we become more whole. And we can invite others to do the same. I just attended a meeting hosted by a devout couple whose son had left years earlier for another man. God called his parents to open up their home every week for any parent in similar

distress. Soon men and women wanting to come out of homosexuality began attending. The group is a beautiful blend of parents and strugglers ministering to each other. I did not want to leave. The humility, mercy and the Spirit's anointing let me know that this couple is right in the middle of God's will, fulfilling their vows to Him.

'Give us the strength, O God, to choose to thank You under duress. May every reminder of the wound lead us into Your mercy, for us and for others.'

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Thursday November 19th:

God takes our wound, keeps it clean through thanksgiving then mobilizes us to wake up the Church. She needs sound teaching and pastoral practice for the sexually broken! 'Through you, the laity, the Church's mission is fulfilled in the power of the Holy Spirit' (St. John Paul II). God wakes up His Church through her wounded. Now raised, we live to prepare her for all the wounded yet to come. My friend Becky rallies families and friends of persons with SSA to join together for prayerful support and hope in an Encourage group; my friend Bill rallies persons coming out of SSA in a dynamic Courage group. God is raising up a wounded, healing army.



'Help us to not get stuck on one or two persons who do not want much to do with us; help us to care for persons who need us badly now. Show us the best way to fulfill our vows to You.'

Friday November 20th:

God is quickening His Church to ensure that every broken person who cries out for mercy 'in her courts' will find merciful care. Our key Living Waters leaders recently gathered and I was amazed at the cohesion, focus, and motivation of all present. God was evidently tending to the fire in us, the fire of love that burns in His heart for His bride. He prepares her for Himself by gathering them, the estranged

children of God whom Joel describes as 'multitudes in the valley of decision; the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision' (Joel 3:14).

'Give us sight for who and what Your Church can be—a clear and clean and merciful witness of Your healing heart for broken ones, O God. I pray especially for _____ Church. May I do my part to prepare her for You, her Bridegroom.'

Saturday November 21st:

Our quickened action always requires more prayer. 'Prayer makes us realize that we need supernatural help and that all the power of the living God is at our disposal' (Fr. Alfred Delp). We who have suffered sin's affliction (our own, another's) will begin to see a turn around, a day of God's favor in which we enter into the fulfillment of God's promise 'to make us a covenant to the people, to restore the land and reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, "Come out" and to those in darkness, "Be free!"' The Father who fights for us promises: 'I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save' (Isa 49: 8, 9, 25). He is our hope, and hope does not disappoint (Isa 49:23).

'We ask for a spirit of intercession to rest on us, as we rise to do Your will-- ambassadors of a new covenant. Give us vision for the good hard task of liberating captives through Your saving love. Keep us alive to You, Hope Himself.'

Sunday November 22nd:

We end our time with a promise. As the Church becomes the evident fountain of living water, the temple Ezekiel describes as rising with water from a healing river issuing out its threshold (Ezek 47), we can be assured that God will gather persons from far away and bring them near. He will 'search for the lost and bring back the strays, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak' (Ezek 34:16). 'See, I will gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return. They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them besides streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, for I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son' (Jer 31:8, 9).

'For the return of our loved ones and Your eternal embrace of them, Father, we trust in You. We open ourselves to Your mercy and offer _____ to You once more. Thank You that You are making Your Church a welcoming home for the broken.' 

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SPECIAL PRAYER REPORT

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 Newsletter (Spring and Fall)
 Mid-Year Report (Summer)
 Year-End Report (Winter)

Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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