

Preparing for Daily Lenten Practices

The Prayer Chair: Fasting from Hurry

Just as we are doing in worship, you are invited to designate a chair in your home that will be your “Prayer Chair” for Lent. Find a time during the day when you can go to the chair for at least 10 minutes, perhaps light a candle, and then spend time with the prayer meditation we have provided for you that is based on the worship theme, scripture reference, and the prayer we prayed on Sunday.

The God Box: Fasting from Worry

The God Box is a way of handing over the things that we worry (perhaps even obsess) about that are beyond our control. You can make a God Box out of a small box, perhaps shoebox size, and decorate it however you choose and place the Serenity Prayer on the lid (you could cut out the one below). Whenever worries pop up, you are invited to write your worries on bits of paper and put them in your God Box as a sign that you are letting go of that which you cannot control into the care of God. Replace the time spent worrying in your head with speaking the Serenity Prayer by H. Riehlhold Neibhur, 20th c. theologian. You could also keep your prayer papers in this box.

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
the courage to change the things I can;
and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Daily "Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Ash Wednesday to Sunday: "Busy"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For the times when we have been too busy for you, God... forgive us.
For the times when we have been too busy to take care of ourselves... forgive us.
For the times when we have been too busy to let our loved ones know how much we
love them... forgive us.
Help us be open to your nudge in this season, to adjust to *your* timing for us.

In this moment we hear your promise:
"You can just be you. It's enough.
You don't have to 'perform' for me,
or try to be anybody else except for who I created you to be."

You do not ask us to live up to the standards of the world's version of success.
We are your children, and you love us. Right now.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.
Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.
I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.
Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.
Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
so that serenity will return.
Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.
With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

*Put any worries in your God Box, if you have one, and pray the Serenity Prayer that is
printed on the Box. As an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

Daily "Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Week 1: "The Right Tempo"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For the times when I have run myself and others ragged... forgive me.
For the times when I have asked of myself too much or too little... forgive me.
Help me find the right tempos for the right times, O God.
Help me be gentle in my learning and growing—with myself and with others.
Help me step back when the toxic and overbearing pace of life
that I believe I must adhere to in order to live up to some external ideal
threatens to tear down my connections to life, love and to you.

In this moment I hear your promise:
your yoke is easy,
your burden light.

You do not ask me to destroy myself in order to please you.
I am your child, created by you, with whom you are pleased... Just. Because.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.
Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.
I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.
Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.
Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
so that serenity will return.
Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.
With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

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Daily "Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Week 2: "Preparing a Table"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For the times when I have put the to-do list before reaching out to others... forgive me.

For the times when I isolated myself to "just push through it"... forgive me.

Help me find the place of balance, O God.

Help me be mindful of my need—and other's need—to be in relationship.

Help me stop and find that relationship with you

as you invite me to beautiful and serene moments of life like this one.

In this moment I hear your promise:

there is a place for me,

and plenty to go around.

You do not ask me to work to earn a place at your table.

I am your child, and that comes with a never-ending invitation. Regardless.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.

Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.

I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.

Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.

Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
so that serenity will return.

Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.

With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

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Daily "Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Week 3: "Tuning In"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For losing touch with the big picture and what's important... forgive me.
For the times when I've lived to work rather than work to live... forgive me.

Help us be truly present to you, O God.

Help me be mindful that my connection to you exists right here in the present,
and putting off time to tune in to you right now robs me
of the deep peace and assurance you have to give.

In this moment I hear your promise:

You are with me always.

It is never too late to make better choices.

You do not ask me to give up my work but you invite me to simply pay attention.

I am your child, and I want to dwell with you.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.

Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.

I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.

Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.

Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
so that serenity will return.

Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.

With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

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printed on the Box. As an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

Daily "Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Week 4: "Living Light"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For striving for material things just to fill a void... forgive us.
For the times when our unburdening burdens the earth... forgive us.
Help us lay down the "shoulds" that dominate our lives, O God.
Help us let go of any unhealthy drive to succeed
and seek the journey of true fulfillment.
Help us to seek your kin-dom by focusing on
that which sustains love and justice, for this is the real treasure of this world.

In this moment we hear your promise:
"I, God, know your every need.
You can let go of so much worry about the future."

You do not ask us to suffer without the things we need,
just to be mindful to live simply so that others may simply live.
We are your children, siblings to one another.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.
Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.
I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.
Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.
Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
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With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

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Daily "Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Week 5: "A Time for Every Matter"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For losing touch with the creation of which we are a part... forgive me.
For the times when I don't let things unfold in their own time... forgive me.

Help me slow down when it is the season of my life for doing so.

Help me celebrate and embrace the ebbs and flow of life.

Give me the ability to sense the balance so that I might
take pleasure in the toil of my life *and* enjoy the fruits of my labor.

In this moment we hear your promise:

"I have set in motion all you need for happiness.

It's OK to slow down and reconnect with the world around you."

You do not ask us to go back to some yesteryear,
but to take time to smell the roses, savor the twilight, bask in the sun.
We are your children, created to flourish along with all of creation.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.

Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.

I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.

Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.

Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
so that serenity will return.

Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.

With this breath I offer my deepest thanks.

*Put any worries in your God Box, if you have one, and pray the Serenity Prayer that is
printed on the Box. As an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

Daily "Time Out" in the Prayer Chair

Week 6: "Give it a Rest"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For not being aware of how my actions affect others... forgive me.
For the times when we I just can't bring myself to care... forgive me.
Help me be mindful of your call to change the things I can to improve life for all.
Help me move toward a world where your love reigns.
In this Holy Week, move me to greater compassion for those
who grieve, for those who are suffering.

In this moment I hear your promise:
"Sabbath rest was made for you.
You don't have to earn it. It is yours, forever."

You do not ask me to be tireless,
but to "give it a rest" so that I can renew myself for the work of renewing others.
I am your child, and I know the lengths you go to love me completely.
Thank you, thank you.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.
Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.
I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.
Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more. No less.
Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
so that serenity will return.
Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.
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printed on the Box. As an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.*

Closing Ritual in the Prayer Chair

Saturday Night Vigil/Easter Sunrise: "Reconnecting"

This is best done in the dark of Saturday night before Easter or early Sunday morning before the sun has risen. Light a candle and let that be your only light if possible.

*Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.
Focus on the candle flame for a couple of minutes.*

I bring my thanks to you, Unhurried God, for this "Time Out" in this chair.
You have "sparked" the following things for me
and I pray that you will help me continue to tend these things going forward:

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does,
I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.
I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.
Give me what I need to flourish in my life. No more. No less.
Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed
so that serenity will return.
Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.
With this breath I offer my deepest thanks for this time with you.

Pray the Serenity Prayer that is printed on the Box. Hold the Box and remember your ritual of putting your worry into God's care in the last six weeks. Do not try to call to mind the content... just focus on what it felt like to put it there. If you have a safe place to burn the contents, make plans to do so (or take it to the church for the communal burning) or simply do a ceremonial dumping in the trash/recycle/shredder.

Finally, as an "amen," take a deep breath before you leave the chair.