



JACOB'S WELL CHURCH

Prayer Trail Guide

Dear Pilgrim,

Two of my favorite ways of thinking about prayer are as a journey and a relationship. That is why I am so delighted about the Jacob's Well prayer trail. This Prayer Trail is an invitation to go on a journey with a friend. To walk, sit, speak, listen and be with God as your friend. It is a call to discover the intimacy of God as your Abba Father, to feel the closeness of the person of the Spirit and to take a step to know and become like Jesus.

This is not a race to be completed quickly. Linger, walk with awareness and go slowly. This is not exercise for the body as much as it is refreshment for the soul. Do not feel you need to stop at every station or complete every activity or pray every prayer. This is not a task to be accomplished and checked off a list. This is a walk with a friend. It is the practice of being with the person of God. Do not go with an agenda or specific expectations but with openness and surrender.

As you use this guide, a small Bible or a journal may be helpful. Go slow. Be aware. Listen, speak, sing, and pray. God is waiting to meet you on this journey.

Happy wandering,

Paul

An Orientation to the Prayer Trail

“Not all who wander are lost.” —J. R. R. Tolkien

“Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Every day I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it.” —Soren Kierkegaard

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” Genesis 3:8

“Walking a trail is treading upon ground that escorts you to both unknown and familiar places. As you walk, you become more aware; perhaps even more alive. Your eyes and heart are opened, as if for the very first time, to a deeper sense of reality than what you left to come here. Riveted by beauty; stunned by wonder; lost in praise... it all awaits you. You unwind from the ties that bind you to the world you have just left and enter as a pilgrim to explore, experience and examine.”

“The Prayer Trail is a journey that at first may seem unescorted. As you continue, however, we believe you will discover the sacred presence of our companion God who, we’re told, went walking in the exquisite Garden of Eden to find Adam. It is our hope that God will find you somewhere on this trail and that you will allow yourself to be found.”

“The prayer of the heart involves becoming curious. Moses became curious when he saw the bush ablaze with fire but not consumed. We’re told that he stopped and went over to look... and when God saw him doing this... becoming curious... then God chose to speak... Moses was ready to listen. Curiosity is a good spiritual virtue to use on the Prayer Trail. Become curious... observant... thirsty... about all that the Father has to tell you and you Him.”

Explore and pay attention:

“Become a pilgrim; be open to learn and ‘taste and see that the Lord is good.’ Hike the trail and use the [seven] designated and marked places to stop, think, pray and rest. The [Prayer Stations] are simply suggestions of how to use the trail and the particular geographical markings which may help you explore your own soul. As you become familiar with the trail, you’ll be able to make your own special places where you encounter God.”

Experience and Ponder:

“The Psalmist exclaims, “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” in Psalm 19:1. Perhaps this is why we are told elsewhere to “*Stay awake in prayer*” (I Peter 4:7). Nature reveals to us a part of God’s glory. Geography, nature, animals and birds are all used in Scripture as windows into our own souls. On the prayer trail, become aware as Jesus asked us when He said, “Look at the birds” and “Consider the lily.” With birds as our teachers and flowers as our theologians we can gain a deep understanding of the spiritual life Jesus was so eager for us to grasp. Let imagination be awakened. Let your heart give rise to your soul’s longings.”

Examine and Respond:

“An important part of any spiritual journey is the part where we examine our heart, desires, ways and thoughts. Self-examination is an integral part of the spiritual life. The Psalmist pleads with the Lord saying:

Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I’m about...’ (Psalm 139:23).

To know ourselves is one way to know the Lord and his grace for us. Places along the Trail and in this Guide will help you to turn both in and up in your thoughts and prayers. John Calvin, the reformer, said in his opening words of the Institutes, ‘Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God.’ Augustine prayed in his Confessions, ‘Grant, Lord that I may know myself that I may know thee.’ Knowing God leads to knowing our self and knowing our self leads to a greater knowledge of God. Let prayer be filled both with words and often wordless expression.”

Stephen W. Smith, Potter’s Inn Ministry

www.pottersinn.com

The Garden

The Prayer Trail begins in the Prayer Garden. As a garden is a place of life and growth, so is our soul like a garden. It needs watering, sunlight, and tending. There are weeds that need to be pulled and new things to be planted and some old things need to wither. It is a place of pruning, seasons, and growth.

The Spirit is the gardener of your soul. In what condition does He find your soul? Begin by praying the following prayer...

The Welcome Prayer

Welcome, welcome, welcome.

I welcome everything that comes to me in this moment

because I know it is for my healing.

I welcome all thoughts, feelings,

emotions, persons,

situations, and conclusions.

I let go of my desire for security.

I let go of my desire for approval.

I let go of my desire for control.

I let go of my desire to change any
situation, condition, person, or myself.

I open to the love and presence of God
and to the healing action and grace within.

Amen.

-Thomas Keating

Now, hear the invitation of Jesus to join Him on this journey:

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?

Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.

I’ll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it.

Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.

I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Matthew 11:28-30 – The Message

Prayer Station #1 God is Good!

Good: virtuous, upright, excellent.

Psalm 149:9 "The Lord is good to all. He has compassion on all He has made."

Psalm 118:1 "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever."

Spend time praising God for His goodness. Be still in His presence here among His creation and the beauty He has given you to enjoy. Take time to thank God for what He has done in your life, for the blessings that you see around you, and for what He is doing in your life now. As you walk along this path today, the sun may be shining brightly, or it may be raining, snowing, or sleeting. In life we have joys, struggles, and sorrows and wonder, "Why?"

Scriptures to Consider:

Psalm 25:8; Jeremiah 33:11; Nahum 1:7; John 10:11, 14;
1 Timothy 4:4; James 1:17

Questions to Consider:

- Do you know and believe His compassion for you?
- Do you trust God in times of trouble?

"Jesus answered His disciples in this way, 'But this has happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.'" John 9:3

Journey Companions:

"God is good. Because He is God, He is worthy of my trust and obedience. I will find rest nowhere but in His holy will, a will that is unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what He is up to." - Elisabeth Elliot

Prayerfully:

As you pray, think on these words:

"You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to You. Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. In the day of my trouble I will call to You, for You will answer me." Psalm 86:5-7

Prayer Station # 2 God is Trustworthy

At one time or another, everyone has questioned trust. Whether it was a friendship that let you down, a relationship that didn't turn out how you thought it would, a portion of your family that fell apart, or one of countless other scenarios—each of us has a different story, but each HAS a story of broken trust. Because this world is far from perfect, trust is a daily struggle. Thankfully, there is someone who will never abandon or fail your trust. He is the perfection in a broken world, and He is the ultimate champion of all that is faithful and true. His incomparable sacrifice was the ultimate way to catch your “trust fall,” and He's been continuing to catch you ever since. Fall on Jesus.

Scriptures to Consider:

Psalms 9:10; Psalm 139:7-10; Proverbs 3:5-6; Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:13-19

Questions to Consider:

- How would you describe your trust level when it comes to God?
- Have things happened to you that made you doubt that God is trustworthy?
- At what times in your life do you feel you trust God most? Why?

Journey Companions:

“Above and beyond all of this, I take great joy and comfort in knowing my Savior has it all blueprinted and planned down to the tiniest detail, and that my job isn't to blubber and worry about the design—but to hush. To be concerned with the principles of morality, servant hood, discipleship and character, and ultimately, to trust. For what is faith without trust?” - Adam Young

“We cannot always trace God's hand, but we can always trust God's heart.” - Charles H. Spurgeon

“When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer.” - Corrie ten Boom

Prayerfully:

Ask God what areas of your life lack trust in Him. Pray deeply and sincerely, and then give these areas over to God with an honest heart. Fall on Him, and allow Him to take these burdens off of your shoulders. Talk to God –

Dearest Father,

Sometimes deciding to trust You instead of myself is the hardest thing I have to do. When my decisions line up with Yours, trusting You is easy. I make the choice, praise You for being a good and wonderful God, and then move on. But when trusting You means making a decision that I don't want to make, I falter. I hesitate, worry, and allow anxiety to guide me instead of You, and that's when I start to lose faith. Faith is the action of making a choice every day to trust You no matter what. For some reason, this is really hard for me to do. I can't always make that choice on my own. God, teach me to trust You! Help me to find a home in Your arms, and peace in Your guidance. Lead me to others who have made the choice to trust You when it's hard, so that they may teach me to do the same. I know I doubt Your plan far too often, but thank You so much for loving me and staying with me regardless. You have never done anything to prove that You are anything but trustworthy. And in a world of broken people, that is more valuable than the greatest of riches.

Thank You – Amen.

Prayer Station # 3 God is Generous

In Matthew 20:1-15, Jesus gives us a picture in story form of the generosity of His Father. The parable is about a landowner who hires workers early in the morning to help with the grape harvest. Throughout the day he continues to enlarge his work pool up until hiring the last group late in the day. When it comes time for payment, the owner decides to start with the ones hired last, and pays them a full day's wage. Seeing this, and then receiving the same pay themselves, those who started early in the morning complained that they should be paid more. To this response, the owner makes it clear that it was his call, not theirs, to be generous to the workers who started later.

In the parable Jesus clearly reveals the good, generous, grace-filled heart of His Father. As the Psalmist reminds us, *"When You (God) open Your hand, they are satisfied with good things."* (Psalm 104:28)

As you are here in this place, look around—you are witnessing the generosity of God. He did not have to create this place, but He chose to generously "open His hand," enabling you to experience His goodness and creativity and so have your senses "satisfied" and your spirit refreshed.

Scriptures to Consider:

Matthew 20:1-15; Psalm 104:27-29; Psalm 103; Romans 8:31-32

Questions to Consider:

- How are you currently perceiving God in your life—as tight-fisted, or open-handed?
- To what degree, if any, do you feel you must earn His generosity and blessing?
- Is your struggle with sin affecting your ability to sense God's generosity?
- How would your closest relationships be different if you were to allow the Father's generosity to fill and flow through you to others?

Prayerfully:

"You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; the stream of God is full of water; You prepare their grain, for this You prepare the earth. You water its furrows abundantly, You settle its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless its growth. You have crowned the year with Your bounty, and Your paths drip with fatness." - Psalm 65:9-11

Prayer Station # 4 God is Love

“The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (hesed) and faithfulness...’” (Exodus 34:6)

At times when we fail, or take a wrong turn, it’s easy to convince ourselves that God couldn’t possibly love us. How could He? After all, by making that mistake back there, we let Him down big time! But God doesn’t think that way. Like a father loves his child, God loves us no matter how far we stray or how many times we fail. His love doesn’t ebb and flow like the tide either but is unchanging and everlasting because it is the essence of His unchanging and eternal character. The Hebrew word “hesed” describes this unchanging, covenant love of God—a love that persists beyond any sin or betrayal to mend brokenness and graciously extend forgiveness, a love that is far beyond just a feeling. It is a loyal love that takes action even to the most undeserving. He loves us just as much when we’re angry and shouting at the ceiling as He does when we’re praising and basking in the glow of His presence. Though we may have let Him down by the world’s standards, by God’s standards we’ve just hopped over another stepping stone toward the person He’s creating us to be.

Scriptures to Consider:

1 John 4:7-10; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Psalm 136:1; Romans 8:28;
2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 5:1, 2

Questions to Consider:

- How has God’s love impacted you and those around you?
- Do you sometimes feel like God’s love for you depends on your behavior? Why or why not?
- Knowing that God loves everyone equally, how does that change the way you treat others?

Journey Companions:

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

“I would rather be what God chose to make me than the most glorious creature that I could think of; for to have been thought about, born in God’s thought, and then made by God, is the dearest, grandest, and most precious thing in all thinking.”
- C.S. Lewis

“God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.” - Saint Augustine

Prayerfully:

There is truly no better way to feel God's love than being in the beauty of His creation. As you sit in the stillness of nature, allow it to remove all the worries and distractions from your thoughts. Let the fresh air fill your lungs, feel God's presence in the breeze, relax your muscles, and wait for Him to speak. Take some time to rest in His tender embrace and allow Him to reassure you of his loyal and overflowing love for you. Then talk to God—

Dearest Creator and Lover of my soul,

Thank You so much for Your unwavering affection. No matter who I am, or who I've been, You love me regardless. You even gave over Your perfect son to take my place on the cross. I am forever in awe of that sacrifice. And not only do You tell me of Your unending love for me, but also that I'm considered one of Your own children in Your sight! What an incredible gift it is to be a child of God! No matter how many times the world brings me down, trying to convince me that I'll never make it, I can rest in knowing that You genuinely love me and have my life in Your care down to the finest detail. Lord, whenever the world fills me with doubt, help me to rest in Your love. Give me the courage and willingness to show that same love to those who hurt me. For without You, love does not exist.

Thank You – Amen.

Prayer Station # 5 God is Holy

I AM with you and all around you, encircling you in golden rays of light.
I always behold you face-to-face. Not one of your thoughts escapes my notice.
Because I am infinite, I am able to love you as if you and I were the only ones in the universe.

Walk with Me in intimate love-steps, but do not lose sight of My majesty.
I desire to be your closest friend, yet I am also your sovereign Lord. I created your brain with the capacity to know Me as friend and Lord simultaneously. The human mind is the pinnacle of My creation, but so few use it for its primary purpose—knowing Me. I communicate continually through My Spirit, My Word, and My creation. Only humans are capable of receiving Me and responding to My presence. You are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made!

(Taken from *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young)

Scriptures to Consider:

Leviticus 20:26; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Isaiah 6:3; Hebrews 13:8; 1 Samuel 2:2

Questions to Consider:

- It is said that when God's holy love grips us, we respond to His kindness with genuine repentance. That follows naturally, doesn't it? "The movement toward holiness is urged by a holy God who loves us with a holy love."
- James Bryan Smith, in *The Good & Beautiful God*
- If God's love were to "burn" something out of your life that is holding you back, what would it be?
- How have you been affected by God's holy love?
- Take some time to jot down your thoughts as you contemplate our God, rich in love and purity.

Journey Companions:

Holy, holy, holy, tho the darkness hide thee,
Tho the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see.
Only thou art holy – there is none beside thee.
Perfect in power, in love and purity.

Poem by Reginald Herber

“God is holy and pure. And God’s holiness and purity are part of God’s goodness and beauty. Holiness is God’s essence. God is not wrathful by nature. Wrath is what humans experience when they reject God. And it is a necessary part of God’s love.”

- *The Good & Beautiful God*

Prayerfully:

Holy Father,

Open our eyes that we might truly see You, and having seen You, to see ourselves as You see us. We pray to be holy as You are holy, and to live up to who we already are in Jesus Christ.

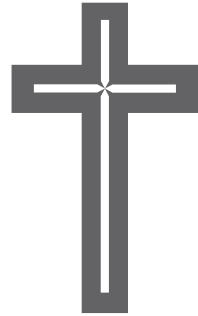
Thank you – Amen.

Prayer Station # 6 God is Self-Sacrificing

Jesus assumed and healed our human condition. In doing so, God demonstrated the depth of His love for all of His creation.

The cross is a symbol of this love and sacrifice. We see the cross all around us, but with this exposure, do we end up missing the weight behind it? Take time here to reflect on the most powerful gift of love—God’s willing sacrifice in giving His only Son to save us.

We were made in God’s image. The more we come to know God, and the more we understand our true nature, then the more natural self-sacrificing will become for us.



Scriptures to Consider:

Philippians 2:6-8; John 15:13; Gospel of John

Questions to Consider:

- Think about all of the mighty acts of God. Do you place the incarnation and crucifixion among these? Wouldn't these be the mightiest of all the acts of God?
- Do you ever wonder if God loves you? In light of the crucifixion, consider... what more could He have done for you to show His love?
- In view of Christ's sacrifice for us, how would you live a life of sacrifice?

Prayerfully:

Take time to respond to God's sacrifice. Be still in His presence. Thank Him for His great love that He willingly sacrificed Himself to redeem you.

Prayer Station # 7 God Transforms

There comes a time when each of us is asked the same question that was asked of Peter. *“Jesus looked at Peter and said, ‘You, Peter, who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”* (Matthew 16:16-17). If our answer is the same as Peter’s, then something profoundly fundamental changes within us. We are transformed.

Transformation is, literally, a restructuring. The blending of who we are with the infinite mystery of who God is, even at the very beginning of our walk with Him, means that transformation is not really an optional choice. We ARE more than we were before.

As we continue to grow in our journey with Jesus, we find that our old sinful attitudes and habits are not as comfortable as they once were. The new creature we are, with the Spirit now living within, no longer fundamentally wants sin to be master, and the Spirit’s transformative power enables us to choose to live as He directs—a life of growing freedom and the fruit of the Spirit being brought forth.

It is not easy for people to comprehend the idea that there is an order of reality other than the everyday life that we experience with our five senses. But when we have been touched by the transformative power of the risen Christ, the scales fall from our eyes and the lens through which we view the world around us is profoundly changed—we literally see with new eyes! We will discern that which our other, older, eyes could never have seen.

Scriptures to Consider:

1 John 4:16b; John 14:23b; Ephesians 4:20-24

Questions to Consider:

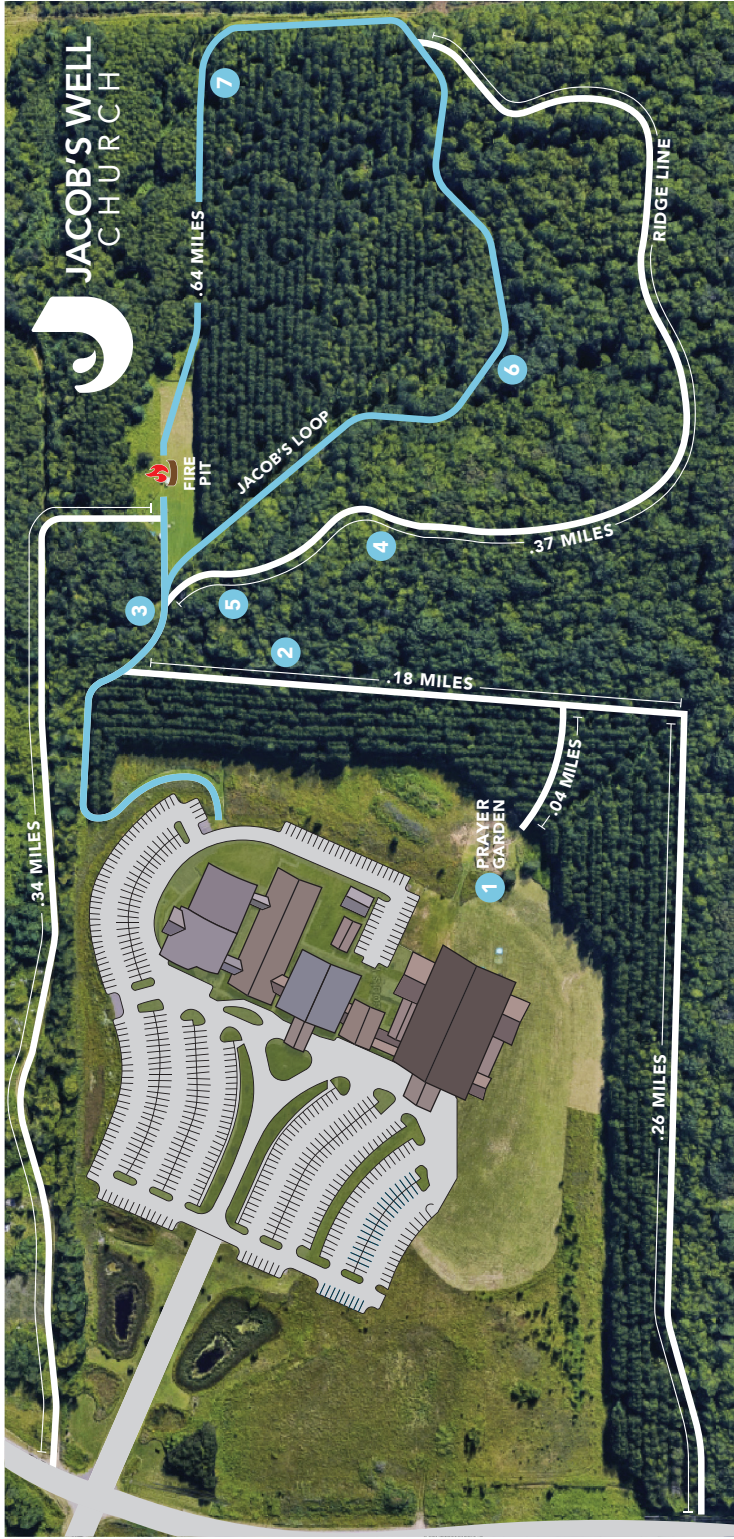
- Do I have an attitude that I should examine with my transformed eyes?
- Am I trying to focus on and heal the broken parts of my own life?
- Do I remember to call upon the transformative power of God to help me when I stumble on my path?

Journey Companions:

“ Behind the night...
somewhere close in time and space...
a tremendous daybreak.”

- C.S. Lewis

Prayer Station meditations created by fellow pilgrims and
based on writings from *The Good and Beautiful God* by James Bryan Smith



INTERACTIVE PRAYER TRAILS

- 1 GOD IS GOOD
- 2 GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY
- 3 GOD IS GENEROUS

- 4 GOD IS LOVE
- 5 GOD IS HOLY
- 6 GOD IS SELF-SACRIFICING

- 7 GOD TRANSFORMS

— 100 FEET