



## The 2017 Summer Challenge

Welcome to another summer challenge. This year you are being asked to set aside at least 15 minutes a day for a devotional time that will include a brief scripture reading, an invitation to prayer and a quiet time of reflection. The focus is on how what we believe impacts how we think and act and pray. The series provides material for 20 days. This was visualized as being five days each week for four weeks.

The scripture readings are selected from the Epistles in the New Testament. They all relate to the practical realities of thinking and living as a follower of Jesus Christ. They are purposefully short selections so as to allow you ample time for prayer and reflection.

Each day will have a prayer theme. Each week cycles through five aspects of prayer. The themes are; a) adoration and praise, b) confession, c) thanksgiving, d) petition (prayers for ourselves, and e) intercession (prayer on behalf of others). The assigned prayer theme for each day is then given a more specific focus. Of course, the intention is not that you restrict your prayers that day just to the suggested theme but rather that you include that theme in your conversation with God.

The emphasis on reflection is to help us break the pattern of allowing our lives to be governed by our daily routines. Reflection invites us to give our faith a larger and more central place in our whole approach to life. The scripture selections do not always match up with the specific prayer theme of the day but they all speak to the practical realities of living as a believer.

Of course, you are free to use whatever bible translation you prefer. However, since these are all passages which speak to the practical challenges of living the faith today you may find a contemporary translation such as the Contemporary English Version (CEV) an appealing choice. For your convenience the selected passages in the CEV are provided.

There is no need to report when you have completed the challenge though I always appreciate your comments and suggestions. Of course, if you have questions about this exercise I would be delighted to chat with you about them.

Your reward for completing the 2017 Summer Challenge is that by the grace of God it will enhance the closeness of your walk with God.

You can record your progress by checking off each day as you complete it.

I will be praying for you daily as you participate in this exercise. In fact, I have accepted the Challenge myself.

Blessings!

Dr. Bob, Alberton Church.



### Week One, Day 1

Prayer theme: Worship and Praise: For God's love and grace.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-6

For reflection and prayer: Our prayers must reflect praise to God for his love and grace, not just for the things he does that may benefit us. God is not just a giver of blessing he is the source of love. From him we learn what grace is all about. The reading reminds us of our unity in Christ.



### Week One, Day 2

Prayer theme: Confession: For taking credit for what God has done.

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-11

For reflection and prayer: We have to confess to God that we often take credit or allow others to give us credit that really belongs to God. Paul's famous teaching about humility in Philippians reminds us what true humility really looks like and it is very humbling.



### Week One, Day 3

Prayer theme: Thanksgiving: For this very day that the Lord has provided.

Scripture: James 3:13-18

For reflection and prayer: When we think about offering a prayer of thanksgiving it is good to begin right where we are and thank God for the day he has provided. Then we need to ask for his guidance to live through it in a way that honours him. We need the wisdom that comes from heaven.



### Week One, Day 4

Prayer theme: Petition: That our love for God and his people might increase.

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

For reflection and prayer: One challenge for God's people is learning to live in love and harmony with the rest of God's people. People sometimes do and say things that provoke or anger us. When that happens how do we recover the peace of Christ and live it out?



### Week One, Day 5

Prayer theme: Intercession: For leaders who seek justice, compassion & peace.

Scripture: Titus 3:1-8

For reflection and prayer: In the affairs of peoples and nations justice and compassion sometimes seem to be rare commodities. Let us pray that those who exercise power and influence in our world may love justice, truth, compassion and peace.



**Week Two, Day 1**

Prayer theme: Worship and Praise: For the wonder of God’s creation.  
Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-24

For reflection and prayer: When we learn about the intricacy of God’s creation and the way he works out his purposes we are moved to a response of praise. Praise God for the wonder and beauty of life. As the reading suggests, our faith in Christ leads us to a new way of thinking.



**Week Two, Day 2**

Prayer theme: Confession: For our hesitation in trusting God.  
Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:3-10

For reflection and prayer: How often we hesitate to trust God. Often we rely on our own resources rather than trusting God to provide. Paul’s advice to Timothy includes a warning about the dangers of loving and trusting riches rather than loving and trusting God.



**Week Two, Day 3**

Prayer theme: Thanksgiving: For the meaning God has led us to find in life.  
Scripture: Philippians 4:8-9

For reflection and prayer: Thanksgiving to God includes our need to offer thanks for the fact that by God’s grace we have in Christ found beauty and hope and peace. Paul reminds the people in Philippi that they need to treasure the things of excellence that God has brought into their lives.



**Week Two, Day 4**

Prayer theme: Petition: That God will help us to make the right choices in life.  
Scripture: Philippians 4:4-7

For reflection and prayer: Sometimes life is very confusing and often we find it challenging to make the right decision from the options that we see before us. And so, we pray continually for God to guide us. We seek the confidence to trust God rather than to worry.



**Week Two, Day 5**

Prayer theme: Intercession: For the victims of violence and injustice.  
Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

For reflection and prayer: May our prayers never cease to represent the needs of those who have been ill treated that they may experience relief and the healing peace of Jesus Christ.



### Week Three, Day 1

Prayer theme: Worship and Praise: For God's strength and wisdom.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:24-5:2

For reflection and prayer: The scriptures present God to us as the source of strength and wisdom. Again, it is appropriate to praise God for who he is and what we learn from his ways. The reading reminds us that there are godly principles to guide us in the new life in Jesus Christ.



### Week Three, Day 2

Prayer theme: Confession: For opportunities that we have failed to take.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

For reflection and prayer: Sometimes God opens a way for us to do something that would honour him and we hesitate or turn back away from fulfilling what he is making possible. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they have an opportunity to show compassion by sharing resources that God has provided with others who are in great need.



### Week Three, Day 3

Prayer theme: Thanksgiving: For the talents and abilities that God has given.

Scripture: Romans 8:28-39

For reflection and prayer: How often we forget to thank God for the interests, abilities and creativity that he has made to be a part of our lives. God is the great provider and all that he has provided contributes to the well being of his people.



### Week Three, Day 4

Prayer theme: Petition: That God would open new opportunities in our lives.

Scripture: Philippians 4:10-13

For reflection and prayer: We pray that God will open new opportunities in our lives. However, we also pray that God will give us a strong confidence in his presence and guidance and a willingness to follow him wherever that takes us. We pray for contentment in God not complacency.



### Week Three, Day 5

Prayer theme: Intercession: For those who are sick, in pain, or facing death.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:18-20

For reflection and prayer: God gives us a great gift by allowing us to be the voice of those who are too ill, weary or afraid to offer prayers on their own behalf. We remember them daily.



**Week Four, Day 1**

Prayer theme: Worship and Praise: For God's grace in Jesus Christ.  
Scripture: Titus 2:11-15

For reflection and prayer: Our prayers ought often to acknowledge that we are indebted to God for his grace and that through his grace we can find grace in our daily lives as well. Paul's counsel to the young man Titus teaches us that God's grace and kindness are intended to move us toward reflecting that grace and kindness in our lives.



**Week Four, Day 2**

Prayer theme: Confession: For recurring failures in our life of faith.  
Scripture: 1 Peter 5:6-11

For reflection and prayer: Often we realize that we have to ask God's pardon for the same offence on many different occasions. When that is the case, our prayers need to be not only that God will forgive us but that he will give us strength to resist the temptation. The reading speaks to us about resisting temptation.



**Week Four, Day 3**

Prayer theme: Thanksgiving: As God provides for needs of both body and soul.  
Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-18

For reflection and prayer: We are often too focused on our material needs to appreciate as fully as we should the spiritual gifts that the Lord provides. Paul's word to the Ephesians reminds them that God is concerned not just for their physical survival but for their spiritual victory as well.



**Week Four, Day 4**

Prayer theme: Petition: That God would bless Alberton Church.  
Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-10

For reflection and prayer: Alberton Church is the place where most of us are living in spiritual community together. We want to flourish rather than just exist. To do that we need to remind ourselves often of all the blessings that God has provided for our spiritual nurture and growth.



**Week Four, Day 5**

Prayer theme: Intercession: For those who have lost a sense of hope.  
Scripture: 1 John 4:7-12

For reflection and prayer: As we pray for those who suffer pain and the consequences of human mortality so we pray for those who have lost hope and their sense of a spiritual future. God's grace is all about the restoration of hope.