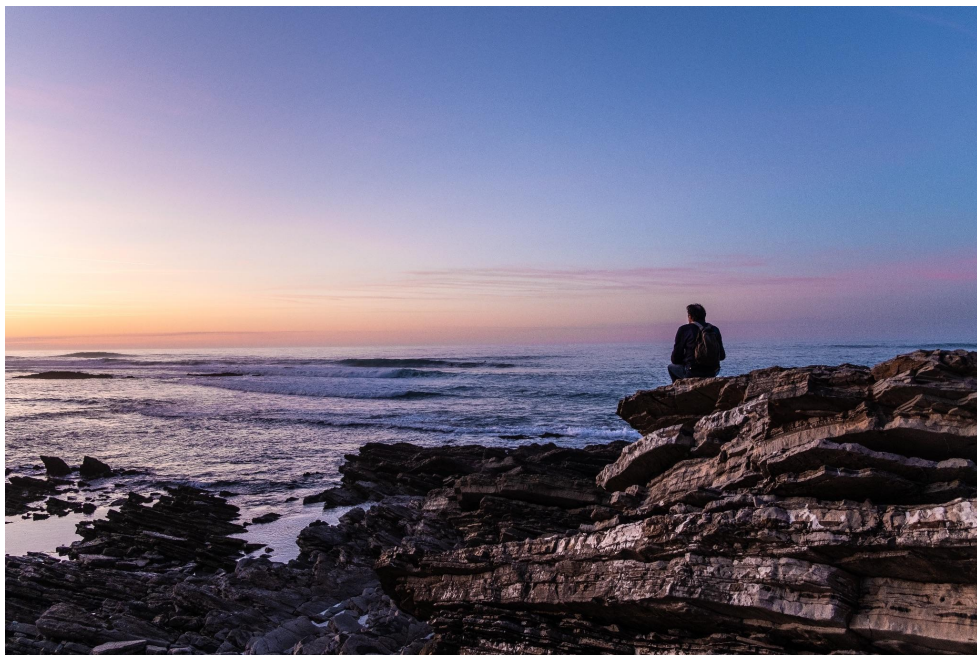


PRAYER RETREAT

2023



“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.”

-Ignatius of Loyola

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! We are so glad you have taken the time and intention to draw away and connect with God. We pray that you'll not only encounter God today, but in so doing you'll be encouraged, shaped, and renewed by His Spirit. We are thankful to Point Loma Nazarene University for letting us use their beautiful grounds. Please respect the facilities and ground and enjoy the various places that have been created for you to sit and rest. We encourage you to walk the campus, observe the beautiful flowers, and take in the expansive ocean views.

We will divide the day into two sections: **Personal** and **Corporate**.

Personal - 9:00-12:00

9:00-9:30 - Introduction to the Examen

9:30-12:00 - Praying the Examen

Lunch - 12:00-1:00

Corporate - 1:00-3:00

1:00 - 1:30 - Corporate Worship

1:30 - 2:00 - Corporate Prayer

2:00 - 2:30 - Corporate Reflections

THE EXAMEN

The prayer of examen is a 500 year-old practice, with a simple framework that helps us recognize God's presence and see how He has been at work in our everyday lives. It invites us to respond with gratitude, examine our emotions, and open ourselves to God's guidance. The Examen is normally prayed in the evening as a way to reflectively pray over the past 24 hours, but you can review the previous week, month, season, or even year!

There have been many different adaptations to the Examen across Christendom in its 500 years of use. One that we will use today is as follows:

An Outline of the Examen

Step 1: Pray for an awareness of God's Presence.

Step 2: Review your recent life in a posture of gratitude.

Step 3: Recognize a "Consolation" and a "Desolation" from your recent life.

Step 4: Repent of the Earthly Nature.

Step 5: Look with new hope for tomorrow.

“Try to keep your soul always in peace and quiet, always ready for whatever our lord may wish to work in you. It is certainly a higher virtue of the soul, and a greater grace, to be able to enjoy the Lord in different times and different places than in only one.”

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA



STEP ONE: AWARENESS

Instructions:

- Find a secluded spot and sit down. You will have time to explore later. For now, focus on being still.
 - Turn off all electronics.
 - Listen to the birds and the sounds.
 - Focus on taking slow deep breaths.
 - Ask God for an awareness of His presence.
 - Talk out loud to God as though He were sitting right next to you, for He is.
 - After ten or fifteen minutes pass, read the following scripture passages and reflections.
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Psalm 139:1-6

*1 You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.*

*2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.*

*5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.*

*6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*

Reflection #1 - You are not foreign to God. You are not too small or too unimportant. He knows everything about you, even the thoughts of your mind before you speak them. His hand is upon you. How does this knowledge make you feel?

Psalm 139:7-12

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

*8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

*10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*

*11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"*

*12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

Reflection #2 - God's presence is ever with you. Jesus ensures this. He promises to never leave you or forsake you and He has given you the gift of His Holy Spirit to be with you in every moment. EVERY MOMENT. Every moment of praise and every moment of shame. He is there. Even the moments we try to hide in darkness and secrecy. They are like light before Him, he sees them all. How does this knowledge make you feel?

Psalm 139:13-18

*13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

*15 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.*

*16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

*17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!*

*18 Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.*

Reflection #3: Not only does God know you and is with you, but He has ordained the days of your life. He has made you the way He wants you. He is sovereign over everything. How would living with this awareness change your life?

“In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.”

DIETRICH
BONHOEFFER



STEP TWO: GRATITUDE

Instructions:

- Walk around campus until you find a beautiful flower.
 - Study the beauty of the flower and all of its details.
 - While standing in front of the flower, read Matthew 6:25-32.
 - Find a place to sit and place your hands in front of you palms up.
 - Picture God handing everything in your life to you.
 - Follow the prompts below.
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Read:

Slowly read through the verse 5 times out loud pausing for 30 seconds in between each reading.

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Pray:

Ask God to open your eyes, your ears, and your hearts to see your life as God sees it. Reflect back over the past year. Picture yourself receiving this past year as a gift from God.

Reflect:

Reflect back over the past year (it may be helpful to think about each past month individually). What are you thankful for? Ask God to show you the gifts of the year. Think about the people you share life with, the people you encountered, your old friends, new friends, your family, your work colleagues. What memories are you thankful for? The simple moments? The extra special ones? Memories at home, at work, with friends and loved ones? In nature? In your Church community? Use the next page to write down the blessings in your life that God brings to mind. Pray over each one, offering God thanks for the gifts in your life.

BLESSINGS:

A photograph of a person's arm and hand reaching out over a body of water. The hand is open, palm facing down, and is positioned just above the water's surface. The water is calm, creating a clear reflection of the hand and arm below. The background shows a distant shoreline with green hills under a bright sky. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

“Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth.”

AW TOZER

STEP THREE: RECOGNITION

Instructions:

- Carefully read the definitions below.
 - Examine the different lists of fruits.
 - Ask God for his illumination to see your life as He does.
 - Follow the prompt.
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“Consolations” and “Desolations”

In Galatians 5:16, Paul calls us to “walk by the Spirit” and not by the flesh. This is an everyday, every moment choice of the believer. And as Paul goes on to point out, our lives will produce fruit revealing which nature we are walking in. And he concludes the section by saying, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). What a beautiful, awesome picture: walking with the Spirit of God hand in hand throughout your day trying to match Him step by step like a little child next to their daddy.

This is God’s desire for us. To live every day with and through and by His presence in our life. But how do we learn to do that? Ignatius of Loyola taught that it required regular reflection, looking back over our lives to see the places and ways we were either in step with the spirit (which he called consolation) or out of step with the Spirit (which he called desolation). By reflecting on, or examining, our days we can learn to better recognize what it feels like to be in step with God.

Ignatius defined a consolation as: “when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and when it can, in consequence, love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but in the Creator of them all.” So consolations are the moments in our days when we are in step with the Spirit’s desire to love us and others with truth, care, humility, and sacrifice. It is when you feel “consoled” by the Comforter and feel compelled to be like Him.

Ignatius defined a desolation as: “the contrary of [the above], such as darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the unquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, said, and as if separated from his Creator and Lord.” So desolations are moments in our day when the presence of God is ignored or not even thought about. It can come in times of willful sin or in soul-numbing busyness. It can come in times of pain and sorrow and frustration, or in simple everyday life. It is not that God is far away, but rather that your recognition of Him is low, thus making you feel “desolate” and alone.

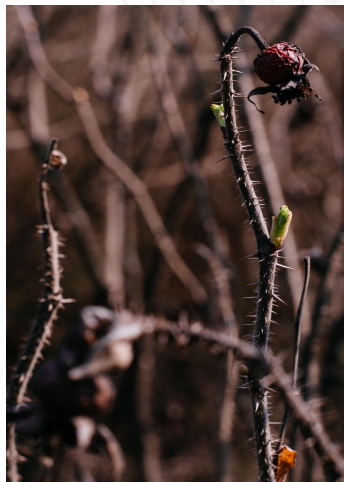
Recognition:

In Galatians 5, Paul lists for us the fruits of our lives when we live according to the Spirit (consolation) or in accordance to our flesh (desolation). Pay attention to the two lists of fruit below. On the next page, draw a line down the center of the page. On one side of the line write at the top of the page the word Consolations; on the other side write Desolations. Ask God to help you recall moments of both throughout the past year. Write down the moments that He brings to mind and reflect on the circumstances of each moment. What were your feelings and thoughts? What led up to those moments? Who or what were part of those moments? Identify any patterns you see in your behavior.



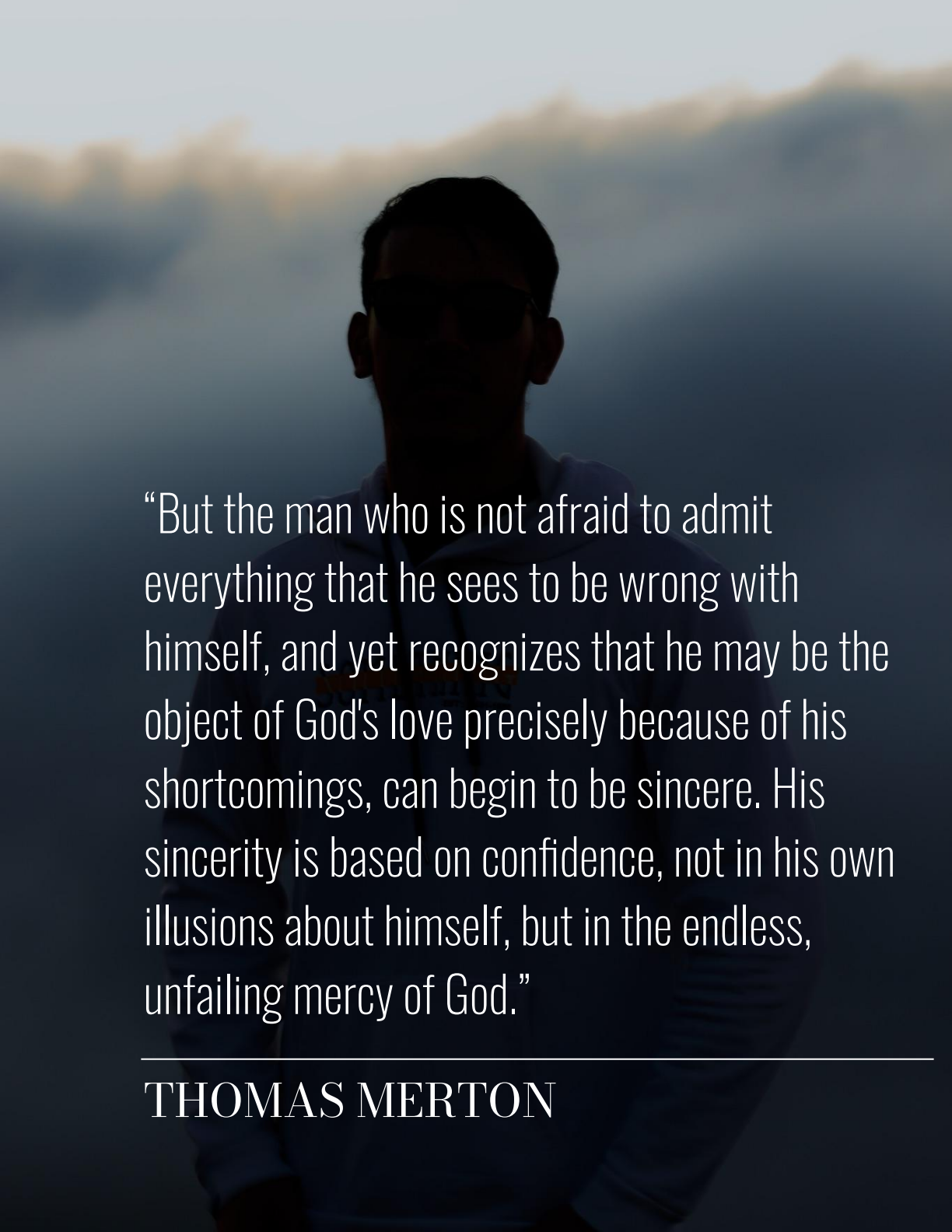
Spirit

love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.



Flesh

sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies

A silhouette of a man with short dark hair, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, stands with his arms crossed. He is positioned in the center of the frame, facing forward. The background is a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise, with soft, wispy clouds in shades of blue, grey, and orange. The lighting is low, creating a contemplative and serene atmosphere.

“But the man who is not afraid to admit everything that he sees to be wrong with himself, and yet recognizes that he may be the object of God's love precisely because of his shortcomings, can begin to be sincere. His sincerity is based on confidence, not in his own illusions about himself, but in the endless, unfailing mercy of God.”

THOMAS MERTON

STEP FOUR: REPENTANCE

Instructions:

- Carefully read back over your list of Desolations.
 - Ask God to help you identify one or two desolations to focus on.
 - Follow the prompts below.
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Colossians 3:1-4

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Reflect

We live totally different lives when our minds are set on things above than when they are set on things below. Spend time reflecting on the desolations on your list. What were patterns in behavior that kept you from setting your mind on Godly things? What distractions were there? What emotions were there? What people were there? What changes can you make in your day to change these patterns in order to help you be in a Godly frame of mind?

Colossians 3:5-10

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Repent

Notice the language God uses about the lives we live out of our earthly natures, “put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature.” We do that through genuine repentance. Recognizing Christ’s death on the cross as the place where our earthly nature was crucified. We are to live differently now. Get down on your knees in an act of humility and apologize to God for living out of your earthly nature. Open your hands before you in an act to receive His gift of a new nature made to live like Christ. Ask Him to help you to clothe yourself in this new nature.

2 Peter 1:3-4

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Commit

Read these verses slowly and carefully. Underline words that stand out to you. Hear what Peter is saying, through His presence and your relationship with Him, God has given you everything you need for a godly life. You can live out of His “divine nature” and not yours. Ask God for the grace to daily recognize His presence with you and the ability to live each moment through that presence.

“God has yet to bless anyone except where they actually are, and if we faithlessly discard situation after situation, moment after moment, as not being “right”, we will simply have no place to receive his kingdom into our life.”

DALLAS WILLARD



STEP FIVE: HOPE

Instructions:

- Find a spot where you can see the ocean.
 - Look at the ocean horizon and picture your endless tomorrows.
 - Follow the prompts below.
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Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

*3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.*

*4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;*

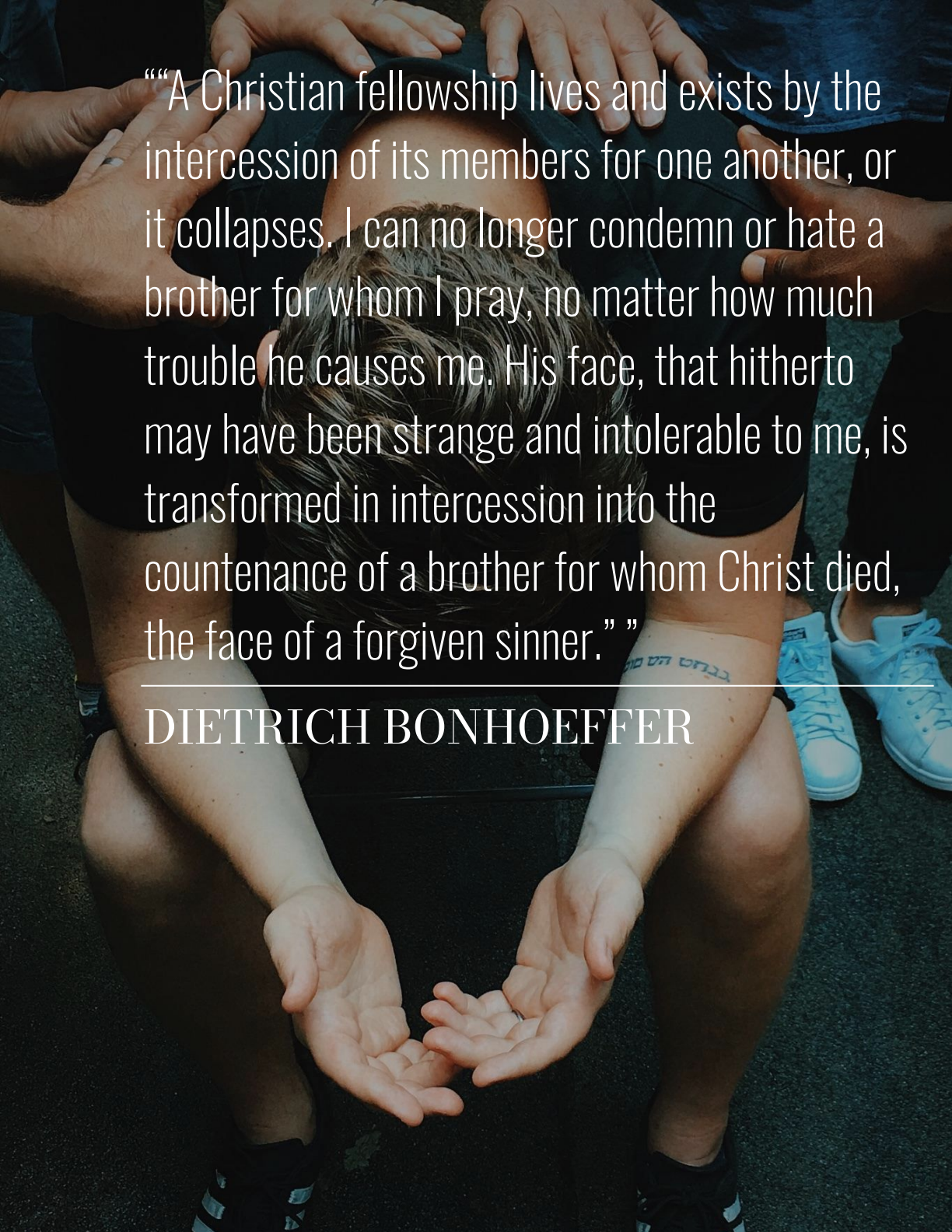
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

*5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

*6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.*

Respond

Every day of your life and in every moment, for all of eternity, God and his goodness will be with you! Get up and go for a walk around the campus. Picture God walking right beside you as your shepherd through every coming situation. Pray for the grace to see his presence in every one of your tomorrows. Ask Him to fill you with hope as you trust in His goodness.



““A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, that hitherto may have been strange and intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner.” ”

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

CORPORATE PRAYER

Instructions:

- Group up with three other believers (male with male, female with female).
 - Be real and open with each other in answering the following questions:
 - What has God been revealing to you today?
 - What patterns of life do you need to repent of?
 - What patterns of life do you need to grow in?
 - How can the others pray for you?
 - Use the following page to write down prayer requests.
 - Take turns praying for one another.
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